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**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING TEACHER
COLLABORATION AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:
A PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Chundra L. Evens

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

April 2019

A DISSERTATION:

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING TEACHER

COLLABORATION AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

A PROGRAM EVALUATION

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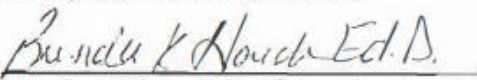
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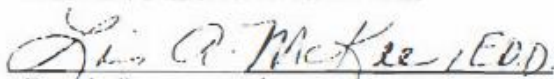
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(December 8, 2018)

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December 8, 2018

Date Approved

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This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Plan

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Plan** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

In 2013, an initiative was implemented throughout a school district to address years of declining student assessment scores. With a directive for engagement in collaboration, this study was conducted to determine what a school was doing well in their Professional Learning Communities, areas for growth during the process, and the extent that the initiative was implemented with fidelity. By analyzing the targeted school's quantitative and qualitative data, this study identified themes regarding overall effectiveness of the initiative and areas for recommended enhancements to facilitate student learning. The evaluation of this process shaped the foundation for development of change recommendations to deepen the impact. The drive for improved achievement facilitated the expansion of a revised policy and procedures to strengthen gains.

PREFACE

After repeated years of declining student state assessment data, Middle High School District (MHSD) incorporated a districtwide mandate for all schools to engage in schoolwide collaborative processes. This evaluation project was initiated in response to a personal concern about the declining trend of student assessment data. Armed with an unwavering belief that the negatively trending data could be positively impacted by effectively implemented strategies and instructional processes, I was eager to delve into the task before me.

After serving as assistant principal within MHSD for seven years, I received notification that I would be appointed to my first principalship. I was ecstatic to learn that I would be leading the instructional team at Middle Senior High School (MSHS). MSHS is the highest achieving school within MHSD. Since its conception, MSHS has maintained an A status school grade and has been recognized as a top US News and World Report school on an annual basis. Most of the instructional staff members were employed at MSHS since its conception. The school culture resonated a sense of deeply rooted pride from faculty, staff, students, parents, and key stakeholders within the community. This pride stemmed from the years of academic success. Instructional staff believed they were experts in their content area with the supporting evidence of high student assessment scores. MSHS was considered the jewel of MHSD because of the stellar academic and artistic achievements of students.

In 2011, a shifting of the tides began, and schools within MHSD began to observe negatively trending student assessment data. MSHS was not immune to this declining trend. Administrative changes began to occur, and the strong sense of school community

began to dwindle. Although it is ideal to begin a new leadership role at the beginning of the school year, I was appointed as the new principal of MSHS in November 2015 and charged with the task of fully implementing schoolwide Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). I was the third principal for MSHS within the past four years, so I was fully prepared for an arduous process.

This evaluation project afforded me the opportunity to explore the fidelity of the PLC implementation process at MSHS from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. I was able to analyze the survey, interviews, and PLC observation data to identify commonalities and themes reported by the respondents. The shared aims of data allowed me to delve more deeply into my evaluation to focus on a change recommendation geared towards achieving implementation of PLCs with fidelity by addressing barriers and components of resistance. Achieving the caliber of effective collaboration to make the PLC process meaningful requires intentional scheduling of time. This led me to propose a modified policy centering on a recommended restructured Wednesday bell schedule to provide dedicated time for engagement in the PLC process.

Currently, all content and art areas within MSHS have functioning PLCs. Although the PLCs are operating at various stages within the “Seven Stages of PLCs,” obtained data reflect all instructional and administrative staff at MSHS are engaging in the collaborative initiative. Within two years of intentional engagement of the PLC process, MSHS was on its journey to substantial student learning gains. Observed student assessment data revealed that the implementation of PLCs played a momentous role in reversing the declining state assessment scores. MSHS is currently in position to

maintain the expectations of district leadership, parents, and key stakeholders for high achieving academic excellence.

The leadership lessons I learned by having experienced this method of program evaluation are abundant. I have learned that school leaders have a responsibility to address barriers impeding successful PLC implementation. Failure to address resistance is equivalent to condoning declining student achievement. The greatest lesson for me was the ability to develop a renewed passion for a belief in collaborative learning. PLCs afford instructional staff and administrators opportunities to improve their pedagogical skillsets, which then transfers to improved instruction within classrooms. This ultimately leads to increased student learning and academic gains.

The experience of completing the evaluation project has influenced my preparation and growth as an instructional school leader. As a transitional leader, I possess the fortitude needed to establish trust and meaningful rapport with my staff and students. I have the confidence to make decisions that are in the best interest of students. In addition, I have the inspirational tenacity and growth mindset to shift a school culture of resistance and fixed mindsets to a culture of collaboration, motivation, and propelled student success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Accomplishing the dissertation journey was by far the most challenging endeavor I have experienced. My work ethic was stretched beyond what I thought my limitations were. My skillset was catapulted like a freshly fired rocket, as I aimed for the targeted finish line. Achieving this caliber of a goal was not acquired in isolation. The levels of tenacity, determination, and grit I reached to successfully complete the doctoral journey was attained because of the love, support, and encouragement of many people.

I would not be who I am today without the prayers yielded to God by my grandmother, Mother Annie Hall. At an early age, she instilled the importance of faith, purpose, and education within me. Her spiritual guidance, love, and willingness to put my needs to pursue higher education above her own, gave me the will and fortitude to always strive for excellence and never give up. I am forever grateful for my praying grandmother.

In addition to the spiritual sustenance needed to sustain during the dissertation journey, I'm thankful for the physical nourishment that was readily provided to me. I was afforded the opportunity to consume healthy and satisfying options rather than being forced to indulge in the typical fast food options for a school administrator who is also a full time doctoral student. Cube steak smothered in homemade gravy, fluffy Jazmin rice, lima beans slow cooked to perfection, and sweet corn bread made with the love of a mother. Dorothy Gordon, better known as my mommy, thank you for making it a priority to plan my favorite home cooked southern style meals on my residency days.

My husband and best friend, Roderick, your words of encouragement during the many late nights meant more to me than you will ever know. Thank you for always

knowing the exact words to say at the precise moments I needed to hear them most. I appreciated your flexibility and understanding when I spent more time writing than conversating with you. Lastly, thank you for pushing me beyond my limitations and not allowing me to give up when physical and mental exhaustion were at their greatest. I will always love you.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention my dissertation chair, Dr. Burg, who always encouraged me to write, write, and write some more. Dr. Burg opened my eyes to see beyond my thoughts and ignited my abilities to make meaning of data in which I did not realize I could do. Thank you for being my consistent advocate throughout this three-year journey, as well as for your willingness to always go above and beyond to ensure that my cohort members and I had a plethora of resources, tools, and supports to be successful dissertation writers. I am forever grateful for you Dr. Burg.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my dissertation expedition to my grandparents, Jimmy and Annie Hall, who raised me to be a Psalms 139:14 being that is a fearfully and wonderfully created Woman of God; to Roderick Evens for being the epitome of love to me; to my fellow TA005 cohort members who embarked on this journey along with me; and to the faculty, staff, and student body that I am blessed to have as members of my team and school community.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Increases in societal pressures for improved student achievement on state assessments has caused school districts throughout the United States to respond with various professional development initiatives aimed at improving educational strategies, and ultimately increasing student achievement and performance. In 2013, Middle High School District (MHSD - pseudonym) faced back to back years of declining state assessment scores in language arts and algebra. State assessment data for MHSD reflected a continuous downward trend in the percentage of learning gains earned by students districtwide. The language arts gains declined from 55% learning gains earned during the 2013-2014 school year to 50% by the 2015-2016 school year. I observed a similar decline in the math assessment data of MHSD, primarily with algebra 1. The math gains declined from 52% learning gains earned during the 2013-2014 school year to 40% by the 2015-2016 school year (citation omitted to preserve anonymity). The problem context of declining student performance on state assessments led MHSD to initiate a districtwide professional development initiative known as Professional Learning Communities. The purpose of the new initiative was to incorporate a collaborative instructional approach towards addressing the 5% - 18% declining state assessment scores and to identify best practice strategies for improved student achievement. The goal of the approach was to ensure that the mission of the school district was accomplished by ensuring that all students achieved their highest educational potential. Classroom instructional staff were directed to document their progress with the professional development initiatives within their annual Individual Professional Growth Plan (IPGP). Although the district expectation is that the implementation of both the professional

development and IPGP be consistent district-wide, progress reports of the initiative reveal that school sites are at various stages of implementation. As a result, it was my goal to examine the recent professional development initiative of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

I also wanted to investigate if there was a possible correlation with student achievement at Middle Senior High School (MSHS). My school district incorporated Richard and Rebecca DuFour's "Seven Stages of PLCs" from their company, Solutions Tree (Graham & Ferriter, 2008). The district contracted Solution Tree consultants to provide quarterly professional development on implementing PLCs with administrators, Instructional PLC Leaders, and Instructional Coaches. This information is shared at the school level by the administrators, PLC Leaders, and Instructional Coaches. If Professional Learning Communities and instructional Individual Professional Growth Plans are not implemented consistently with fidelity throughout a school community, student achievement may be affected or influenced. Periodic documentation of the completed progress of the "Seven Stages of PLCs" is paramount to ensuring appropriate monitoring of implementation.

Purpose of the Evaluation

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a professional development framework that facilitates collaborative teams working towards a common goal. The foundation of this common goal is a focus on constant enhancement. Schools that have implemented the PLC framework with fidelity "have clarity of purpose and a collaborative culture, are able to turn collective inquiry into best practice, and are

committed to continuous improvement” (Rentfro, 2007, pg. 1). The PLC framework also is paramount in enhancing the effective instruction of teachers.

PLCs provide opportunities for instructional staff to work collaboratively on improving their instructional practice. The ultimate goal of the collaboration within PLCs is to improve student achievement. The purpose for implementing PLCs as a professional development initiative within Middle High School District (MHSD) was to engage instructional staff and students in continuous and simultaneous collaborative learning. The collaboration required during the PLC process provides opportunities for teachers to consult with colleagues on best instructional practices. PLCs also provide teachers with the opportunity to collectively develop strategies to address specific situations and standards where students were not successful.

Since their formal conception in the late 1980’s, research has shown that teacher collaboration in the form of PLCs attributed to increases in student learning. Student achievement gains are attributed to the sharing of goals among the instructional staff. This goal sharing facilitates improved instructional staff learning, as well as a greater commitment from each member of the PLC.

Author Shirley Hord (1997) summarized the outcomes for instructional staff as a result of implemented PLCs. Hord observed “a reduction of isolation of teachers, increased staff commitment to the mission and goals of the school, and increased vigor in working to strengthen the mission.” Hord also observed how “staff shared responsibility for the total development of students, as well as collective responsibility for students’ success.” Hord viewed this as “powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice, which creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and

learners.” Hord further observed “increased meaning and staff understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles they play in helping all students achieve expectations.” Finally, Hord detected “higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students” as a result of implemented PLCs (Hord, 1997, pg. 5-6). Working in collaboration rather than in isolation provides teachers opportunities to gain insight from the instructional practice strengths of their colleagues. When teachers work as a collective unit, they are all able to bring their strengths to the table and grow from the knowledge of others in areas that they may not feel as strong.

Hord further summarized the outcomes for students as a result of implemented PLCs. She observed a decreased dropout rate and fewer classes skipped by students. Hord discovered “increased learning that was distributed more equitably in the smaller high schools.” She also revealed “greater academic gains in math, science, history, and reading, as well as smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds” (Hord, 1997, pg. 5-6). Shirley Hord provided a detailed overview of the potential academic and achievement gap benefits of implemented PLCs. I also share her sentiment regarding the potential benefits that could be attained at MSHS, specifically in the areas of math and language arts. By sharing ideas and instructional strategy strengths, teachers at MSHS have opportunities to strengthen core academic gains and learning for students.

Middle High School District (MHSD) recognized the benefits of incorporating PLC’s. PLC programs provided potential improvement in overall student achievement in content areas, such as language arts and math, through the collaborative efforts of

instructional staff members. PLCs also served as a potent and research based professional development strategy to facilitate this desired improvement. District Leadership within MHSD established a clear expectation for all school principals to ensure that teachers within MHSD schools were provided with a minimum of one hour weekly to be dedicated to working collaboratively within professional learning communities (PLCs). At Middle Senior High School (MSHS), teachers are provided with 1 hour weekly on Wednesdays, as well as 30 minutes each morning of the school week. Since MSHS encompasses sixth through twelfth grade students, teachers are organized into PLCs by grade level for middle school teachers and by content area for high school teachers, and they are required to utilize the designated times to meet a minimum of one hour weekly as a collaborative group.

The initial meeting of the collaborative group is dedicated to identifying and agreeing upon established norms and procedures while completing their weekly meetings. During the weekly meetings, teachers discuss commonalities among their students, strengths and weaknesses of the standards and curriculum, strategies for developing common formative assessments, as well as strategies to address areas of student growth opportunity based on the results of the formative assessments. Finally, teachers are provided with student baseline data to develop their Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). The IPDP is the annual plan for personal growth documented by all teachers. This plan provides teachers with a consistent process and platform for documenting student achievement goals based on the direct instruction of each teacher. Author Shirley Hord stated, “The professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement”

(Hord, 1997, pg. 1). For these reasons, I chose PLCs as my program evaluation project to assess their effectiveness on increased student achievement on state assessments in language arts and math at MSHS and to determine if implementation had been completed with fidelity.

MHSD utilizes Richard and Rebecca DuFour's "Seven Stages of Professional Learning Communities" protocol as the instrument to monitor the fidelity of the implementation of PLCs within schools throughout the district, (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). Each PLC is required to monitor their engagement and fidelity utilizing the stages within this protocol. Stage 1, Filling Time, is the foundation stage that is characterized by desires of the PLC members to understand purposeful collaboration. This stage can be difficult and frustrating for teachers until they understand that their time within the PLC is not intended for venting, but rather to work as a collective team towards identifying methods to improve instruction and student achievement (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

The second PLC stage, Sharing Personal Practice, is characterized as the stage where teachers begin to take genuine interest in why they are meeting as a collaborative group. In this stage, teachers begin to share effective strategies incorporated within their individual classrooms. Teachers feel a sense of comfort engaging in personal instructional best practice conversations with colleagues. The danger of this stage occurs when the instructional practice conversations fail to incorporate the learning needs of students as well as the rigorous needs for higher order thinking and learning. Because the focus remains on the individual teacher, the focus of student learning is never reached.

An effective PLC involves moving from what an individual teacher has accomplished to what the collective unit accomplishes (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

Although all of the PLC stages are important, one of the most critical stages is Stage 3. In this stage, PLC members complete the planning process, with common lesson plans as the end result. At this stage, teachers have learned to work as a collaborative unit with a clear plan for adapting instructional practices for improvements. Just as in stage 2, the focus has not shifted to student learning in stage 3, so it is critical that PLCs continue the momentum towards the next stage once acquiring stage 3 (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

The stage where PLCs begin to shift the focal point from teacher instructional practices to student learning is stage 4. Teachers within this stage develop common assessments, identify exactly what students should learn, as well as what student evidence should be documented. Stage 4 is the essential stage of PLCs because it is the stage where the initial focus towards impacting student achievement begins (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

Once the PLC has developed and administered common assessments, it is important that they review and reflect on the student data and results of the assessments. Critical discussions within Stage 5, Analyzing Student Learning, provide opportunities for PLC members to identify and adapt instructional practices to increase student learning. Although this stage requires teachers to face having their individual student results reviewed openly within the PLC, Stage 5 is the most critical stage for identifying student learning gains (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

The final two stages of the PLC process, Stages 6 and 7, are very similar because they both place emphasis on reflection. In stage 6, PLC members focus their actions on

identifying and reflecting how they can adjust their instructional practices to assist students who demonstrated difficulty on the common assessment. Stage 7 places emphasis on PLC members reflecting on their most effective instruction. Once PLC members arrive at the point of being able to identify and reflect on their actions that best impact student learning, the seven-stage process of PLC development has come full circle. Because improvement in student learning and achievement is an on-going, continuous process, the seven stages never end. Instead, the circle of improvement continues, just as a desire for student learning continues (Graham & Ferriter, 2008). This important concept for continuous student improvement is the driving force behind the PLC process at MSHS. Currently, the overall PLC stage exhibited at MSHS is a stage 2 emerging towards stage 3; however, there are several content areas, such as language arts and math, which have achieved higher PLC stages, such as stage 4 and stage 5. As the principal of MSHS and because PLC implementation involves continuous student improvement, it is my preference that MSHS matriculates through the stages and achieves all seven stages of PLCs continuously based on the unique needs of our students.

Rationale

In 2013, Middle High School District's three Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction met with all site-based school administrators and instructional coaches regarding the proposal for district-wide Professional Learning Communities at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Each site-based school administrator and instructional coach was provided with the district's proposed plan for implementation of the professional development initiative. A series of mandatory professional development

opportunities were scheduled on the implementation and monitoring of PLCs. During these professional development opportunities, I was made aware of the “Seven Stages of PLCs” (Graham & Ferriter, 2008). District Leadership referenced the work of author and Professor John Hattie, who believed that successfully implemented stages of PLCs can have a considerable effect on improving student learning. Hattie’s “Barometer of Influence” stated that student achievement can potentially be positively impacted by upwards of a 0.9 effect size when incorporating high caliber formative assessments developed collaboratively within a PLC (Hattie, 2008). A quality common formative assessment could provide opportunities for instructional staff to address key questions when engaging in a PLC. Opportunities to discuss strategies to address students who did not learn or were not successful, as well as devising ideas to continually challenge accelerated students, are just a few of the critical content advantages of engaging in collaborative practices.

At the conclusion of the first year of implementation, District Leadership recognized that implementation of PLCs did not occur with fidelity, as originally planned throughout all of the schools within the district. District Leadership also recognized that a paradigm shift does not occur within such a short period of time, so subsequent professional development opportunities on the specifics of PLC implementation were scheduled. Currently, we are beyond the mid-point in the third school year of having a district-wide mandate for school-wide PLCs. My reason for selecting the implementation of the PLC program within my school was because, although we were now three years into a district-wide mandate for implementation, I was intrigued with determining any possible effects of this program on student achievement with the current level of fidelity

of implementation. Currently, Middle Senior High School (MSHS) is operating between stage 2 and stage 3 in relation to the Seven Stages of PLCs, in that the majority of the grade level and content area PLCs have established norms, are meeting at least 1 hour weekly to share instructional practices, and are utilizing common planning and lesson plans to drive instruction. The fidelity of implementation is monitored by school administrators through weekly PLC meeting notes.

As the newly appointed Principal of Middle Senior High School (MSHS), I have an intimate and personal connection to ensuring that PLCs are implemented within all core and fine art areas of the school, not just because this is a district mandate, but because increased student achievement is my ultimate goal. Beyond this mandate, I have a personal belief that, just as students learn best in small, collaborative settings, instructional staff develop and improve while collaborating with colleagues. As the school administrator, I am required to meet with each instructional staff member periodically to review their documented goals within their Individual Professional Growth Plan (IPGP). Although each staff member has an individual goal based on their subject area, I have noticed similarities in goals of instructional staff members within the same PLC. This provided me with evidence that a form of collaboration was occurring within the departments at MSHS. In addition to periodically reviewing IPGP's of instructional staff members, I am also required to monitor and participate in the weekly PLC meetings that occur within my school. I also have an expectation for members of my leadership team to complete this as well. One of my priorities is to model the expected behavior within PLCs with my leadership team and when conducting faculty meetings with the instructional staff.

The implementation of PLCs within a district and school setting can begin the process of achieving success on the established student achievement goal. Achieving success within this process requires the consideration and inclusion of all key stakeholders during the implementation process. To achieve district-wide or school-wide success, the implementation process should consider every instructional staff member, non-instructional staff member, and administrator.

I believe that my selected program evaluation on the implementation of PLCs is important to all stakeholders and components within my school, as all stakeholders share the common interest in achieving increased student gains on state assessments in areas such as language arts and math. Research provides evidence of the benefits of a collective and collaborative approach of instruction (Lieberman & Miller, 2008). These benefits have resulted in documented increases of student and instructional performance, as well as in individual school and overall district performance. This is due in part to PLCs occurring in all facets of a school and district. Instructional staff from my school are afforded the opportunity to not only collaborate with colleagues within our school, but also with instructional staff members from other schools throughout the district who teach a common subject. The power of this type of collaboration has the potential to impact student achievement district-wide on state assessments, which can not only impact the district, but also the educational community at large. Authentic changes in instructional practice can facilitate improved student learning as a result of PLCs. When implemented with fidelity, PLCs can take hold throughout a school, in schools throughout a district, and in some cases throughout a state (Lieberman & Miller, 2008).

Goals of the Program Evaluation

The intended goal of my program evaluation of the implementation of PLCs within Middle Senior High School (MSHS) was to assess how well we were implementing PLCs at my school and the degree of fidelity we were implementing PLCs in relation to Rick DuFour's Seven Stages of Professional Learning Communities. I was also interested to see if there was a positive impact overall on student achievement. Although MSHS had consistently maintained student gains since the school's conception in 2003, the level of gains had consistently declined in recent years in language arts and math. This trend was not restricted solely to MSHS. This was a systemic trend throughout Middle High School District (MHSD). Implementation of PLCs was a strategic attempt of MHSD to address this decline in student achievement. It was my intention to see if there might be an increase in student achievement on end-of-quarter and end-of-year exams based on the implementation of PLCs. It was also my intention to see if there was an increase in student achievement based on instructional staff members successfully achieving their documented growth plan goals (IPGP), as established within their PLCs.

Countless studies and research by PLC researchers, such as Dr. Richard DuFour, have shown that PLCs can have positive and impactful effects on instructional staff skills and knowledge as well as on student learning (DuFour, 2015). If the PLC was implemented with fidelity over a period of time and was focused on key concepts, content, and instructional standards, instructional staff members would ultimately achieve their goals of increased student achievement. This was primarily due to the fact that appropriately implemented PLCs can facilitate the mastery of instructional content, improve teaching skills, provide instructional staff members with the opportunity to

evaluate their own instructional performance and the performance of their students, and finally address the identified changes needed to improve student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). PLCs, when implemented as a cycle of continuous instructional and student improvement, can facilitate gains in student achievement. Instructional staff members are continuously collaborating to pinpoint areas of self-improvement, which ultimately identify potential areas for improved student learning. For these reasons, I believe that my selected program evaluation directly relates to improved student learning.

Exploratory Questions

My primary exploratory questions for this dissertation project were:

1. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school perceive as working well in the implemented Professional Learning Communities?
2. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school perceive as not working well in the implemented Professional Learning Communities?
3. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school perceive as the greatest challenges in the implemented Professional Learning Communities?
4. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school suggest as methods to improve the implemented Professional Learning Communities?

As a school principal, I also wished to identify and report on the implementation of the PLC program at the specific stages (“Seven Stages of PLCs”) and the Individual Professional Growth Plans and share this identified information with district leadership, as district leadership requires periodic progress monitoring of the effectiveness of implemented PLCs in all schools throughout the district.

My secondary exploratory questions to support my primary inquiry were:

1. Is there any relationship between a Professional Learning Community that is meeting the expected goals for implementation, and any changes in student achievement within one middle-high school?
2. According to staff perception within one middle-high school, to what extent do they perceive they have built a Professional Learning Community within the school?
3. What is the role of the school administrators within one middle-high school regarding collaboration within Professional Learning Communities?

I believed that the identified secondary questions would provide me with instructional and administrative staff members’ insight and perceptions of implemented PLCs within MSHS.

Conclusion

As a result of this program evaluation project, it was my intention to identify areas of implementation of professional learning communities within Middle Senior High School that may be improved upon to ensure consistency and fidelity. This could reveal correlations between professional development initiatives, such as Professional Learning Communities and Individual Professional Growth Plans. Finally, my ultimate intent was

to investigate the impact learning communities could potentially have on supporting teacher collaboration and student achievement gains.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model has become a token strategy for school districts throughout the United States to achieve instructional collaboration towards improved student achievement. PLCs are not a trend or the latest fad, as they have been in existence in schools and businesses since at least 1993. Defined as an “ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, pg. 11), PLCs are a systematic collective approach towards achieving increased student academic success. The initial step in the process of implementing the PLC model within a school district is to first identify the necessity for the implemented program. The need should be centered on how the implemented program would impact student achievement. In 2013, Middle High School District (MHSD) implemented district-wide Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as a response to declining student achievement on state assessments. The purpose of my evaluation was to examine the Professional Learning Communities initiative at my school, and the opportunities it provided for educators faced with ongoing student assessment and curriculum mandates.

This evaluation was framed with an effectiveness and goal-based focus in conjunction with a formative style evaluation. These Patton style approaches provided an improvement-oriented form of evaluation that focused on making things better rather than rendering summative judgement. This approach tends to be more “open-ended, gathering varieties of data about strengths and weaknesses with the expectation that both

will be found, and each can be used to inform an ongoing cycle of reflection” (Patton, 2008, pg. 116). I think identifying strengths and weaknesses of PLCs will progress into achieving the ultimate goal for implementing the model in the first place: increased student achievement on state assessments. Author and PLC Consultant Timothy Kanold (2011) described the strength of PLCs as empowerment. Kanold also believes that this characteristic of strength attracts many school districts to implement PLCs in the first place. Through PLCs, school districts are able to empower instructional practice skills of individual teachers and empower school leadership skills to promote improved student learning (Kanold, 2011). I believe this is one of the reasons MHSD was attracted to PLCs. Now that MHSD is equipped with the empowering vehicle for change, the third year of district-wide implementation of the PLC model should provide the resources and support key stakeholders need to achieve effective implementation of the model with fidelity.

Stages of Professional Learning Communities

Implementation of the Professional Learning Community Model is not a quick and easy undertaking. Implementation of this model requires sufficient time, as this model encompasses a collaborative effort built on trust, respect, and an agreed upon mutual common goal. This model requires frequent collaboration and progress monitoring of collected data. The PLC model also requires personal and collective reflections. Authors Parry Graham and Bill Ferriter (2008), and Richard DuFour (2015) described the PLC model in a similar manner, which included seven stages of implementation. Initial meetings should incorporate the development of clear goals and guidelines, rather than as opportunities for educators to express frustrations and

discontentment. Once boundaries and norms are established, the learning community shifts into the process of sharing best instructional practices that proved to be successful with students. Teachers may be afforded opportunities to observe colleagues conducting these best practice strategies within their classrooms. Once the learning community effectively shares best practice strategies, they shift into the stage of common lesson planning of effective lessons. The lessons facilitate the next stage, the development of common assessments. After collecting student data from the administered common assessments, the learning community is at a point where they should discuss successes and opportunities for improvement on the common formative assessment. The final two stages involve the learning community responding to the data results with modifications and differentiation, followed by the reflection on their personal instruction (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015). PLC members can demonstrate effective progress through the Seven Stages of PLCs effortlessly by easily transitioning through stages.

Unfortunately, some PLCs are not able to transition beyond the first stage. Typically, if a collaborative culture has not been established within the school, it will be difficult for a PLC to move beyond the establishment of common goals, norms, and development of a unified plan for increasing student achievement.

Authors Youness Elbousty and Kristin Bratt (2010) believe that each stage of PLC implementation is successful only after teachers within the PLC gain an understanding of the importance of working collaboratively. Elbousty and Bratt further stated that teachers will not gain appreciation for effective collaboration within each stage until they learn to value the time they have to work together, make student improvement their focal point, and decide that working towards an improved school community is a

priority (Bratt & Elbousty, 2010). East Coast High School is one example of the effective implementation of the stages of PLCs within a school. The schoolwide goals for each of the PLCs within East Coast High School were clearly established and specific in nature. Teachers were provided the necessary support structures, such as common planning time, to establish effective PLCs. With the key foundational pillars in place, East Coast High School was able to facilitate high functioning PLCs, and continuous improvement as the teams transitioned through the seven stages. Elbousty and Bratt believe that the success of the PLC stages within East Coast High School was attributed to the established culture within the school. East Coast High School's culture was grounded on schoolwide collaboration (Bratt & Elbousty, 2010). I believe that in order for Middle Senior High School to effectively establish PLCs that transition through the seven stages seamlessly, I must promote the importance of a schoolwide culture with collaboration as the foundational core. This type of collaboration should begin with the school leader and resonate in all members within the school community.

Culture of Professional Learning Communities

I have a strong belief that successful collaboration within an organization requires mutual respect, commitment, and ownership in the collaborative efforts by all key stakeholders. This is also the case with collaborative groups within PLCs. When implementing PLCs, it is essential to establish a culture of collective responsibility. Authors and PLC advocates Kenneth Williams and Tom Hierck (2015) shared my sentiment regarding this collective responsibility. Williams and Hierck further stated that it is also essential to utilize storytelling as a major component to establishing culture within a school. The storytelling should focus on the various challenges, trends, setbacks,

and breakthroughs of the school. The storytelling should also be aligned to the schoolwide mission, vision, and goal (Hierck & Williams, 2015). As a school leader, I believe that storytelling is an important factor in culture establishment because it allows me to establish the tone with my faculty that the story of our school will only change when we as the school community begin to change. Storytelling within a school is not isolated to just the school leader, each member of the school community plays a role in telling the story of the school, just as each member within a PLC plays a role.

Flourishing PLCs do not assume a superior and subordinate characteristic. Instead, all members within the community equally contribute. Anthony Muhammad (2009) referred to this type of approach as technical change and cultural change (Muhammad, 2009). Technical change refers to changes or revisions within a set curriculum, text, or instructional standards, while cultural change refers to a transformative change within a school based on the beliefs about the direction a school should move in versus the belief of where the school once was (Muhammad, 2009). I believe that cultural change within a PLC requires changes in traditional habits, procedures, and expectations of meeting within a collective group.

Collective responsibility is a difficult task because it requires all participating members to set aside personal agendas, thoughts, and beliefs in order to work collaboratively to exchange best practice strategies, instructional methods, and review data. In essence, teachers within a PLC that is implemented with fidelity will gain strength in areas of weakness by collaborating with their colleagues, while simultaneously providing strength to a colleague in areas in which they may have shortcomings. This collective responsibility will facilitate mutual ownership in achieving

the ultimate goal of increased student achievement. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) described this type of collective responsibility as four foundational pillars of PLCs.

The first pillar, the mission of the PLC, describes the purpose and reason why the learning community exists. This pillar is where priorities are established to guide future decisions of the learning community. The vision of the PLC is the second pillar which provides the learning community with the answer to what they aspire to become or accomplish as a result of their collective efforts. In essence, vision provides the directional steps in which the learning community must take to accomplish the mission. The values established within the PLC consists of the third pillar. Values determines how each member of the learning community can contribute to the collective efforts of the entire group. Identified commitments are made to the improvement initiative at this pillar. The final pillar, goals, focuses on identifying the specific priorities to achieve the established benchmarks (DuFour, et al., 2010). Effective PLCs that operate within the four pillars facilitate collaborative environments conducive for student learning gains.

The four foundational cores should not be viewed as an item to check off of the completion list. Instead, these cores should become the foundational core of the culture of the PLC. Accomplishing this task increases the potential for a fully functioning PLC that achieves established improvement initiatives with fidelity. Unfortunately, not all schools have experienced this accomplishment and do not obtain execution of these pillars with fidelity.

A true culture shift towards Professional Learning Communities requires genuine commitment from all areas of a business or educational institution. In local school

districts, this shift must occur at the district level and then trickle down to every school. Robert Eaker and Janel Keating (2012) referenced the importance of always keeping the mission and goal of the initiative as the primary focus of shifting a culture. This is crucial to ensuring that all staff members within the district continually remember that the district's mission and goal begins in each individual classroom. Ann Hilliard (2012) referred to this as the foundation for establishing a schoolwide learning culture. Hilliard states that it is important for every individual within the school setting, including every administrator and every classroom teacher, to create an atmosphere of collaborative trust. Once the collaborative schoolwide environment described by Hilliard is established, schools can begin to work towards achieving their mission and goal.

Educators within Middle Senior High School must begin to view PLC's as "a proven, commonsense approach to achieving our real goal of helping all students learn more" (Eaker & Keating, 2012, pg. 52). Basically, the PLC model embraces all facets of a district and individual school's culture. To ensure the shift in culture, district and school leaders must continually model the key foundational pillars of effective PLCs. This modeling should occur during every professional development, every faculty meeting, student support project, and district and school activity. Failure to do so will ultimately lead to ineffective implementation of PLCs.

Ineffective Implementation of Professional Learning Communities

When faced with the challenge of improving student performance and gains on state summative assessments, many school districts have resorted to such improvement initiatives and the Professional Learning Community Model (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). This model aims for consistent collaboration of teachers within learning communities.

The focus of the learning community is on sharing best practice strategies, reviewing student data, developing common lessons and assessments, and reflection on observed gains. Teachers within learning communities work together towards identifying students who are not demonstrating proficiency. They work collectively to problem-solve within the learning environment to identify differentiated strategies to help the identified students achieve proficiency. This check and balance model approach towards improvement typically works to improve student achievement.

If the foundational pillars of the PLC model are not implemented with fidelity, implementation of the PLC model will be strained. Steven Weber (2011) describes this as dysfunction within a PLC. Failing to adhere to the foundational pillars, such as establishing initial procedures and norms, can quickly lead to dysfunction within a learning community. Failing to discuss, agree upon, and incorporate basic professional courtesies, such as the PLC meeting start time and the agreement to be respectful to one another, can quickly cause a PLC to spiral out of control and not achieve the desired goal of improved student learning and achievement.

If members within a PLC fail to establish norms, collaboration within the collective group will be strained. The strain will be intensified if the learning community also fails to establish a purpose for why they are meeting. A learning community that fails to be goal-oriented is a learning community full of dysfunction. Ultimately, this dysfunction will lead to the inability of team members to have trust and rapport with one another. Once the trust factor is nonexistent within a PLC, team members will begin to stop communicating with one another, and eventually will stop attending weekly PLC meetings. This level of dysfunction makes accomplishing student learning outcomes

virtually impossible. Author Patrick Lencioni (2002) reflected on a similar belief of dysfunctional PLCs in that all teams will exhibit a form of dysfunction because teams are composed of imperfect individuals. Every educator that comprises a PLC has their own belief and perspective regarding what is essentially important for students to learn. They also have their own perspective regarding the most appropriate strategy to ensure that all of the students achieve mastery of the curriculum. Until the learning community is able to reach a consensus with norms, goals, trust, and communication, dysfunction will remain, and long-term learning outcomes will never come into fruition.

Educational researchers, Richard Penny and Rachel Sims (2015), completed an analysis of a failed PLC within a high school setting. The focus of their analysis was on English, Math, and Science PLCs within the school. Their analysis of the collected qualitative and quantitative data revealed that failure to adhere to the foundational pillars led to failure within the PLCs. Sims and Penny conveyed that due to a lack of common planning periods, teachers did not have adequate time to collaborate within their PLCs. This is one of the prerequisites for successful implementation of PLCs. They further found that although lesson planning was impacted by PLCs, student learning was not impacted as a result of the implemented PLCs (Penny & Sims, 2015). Ultimately, the findings of Sims and Penny demonstrated the essential need for the foundational pillars of PLCs, as well as an instilled system of continuous improvement during the seven stages of PLC implementation.

Professional Learning Communities' Impact on Student Success

Studies by educational experts such as John Carter, Timothy Kanold, Mona Toncheff, and Gwendolyn Zimmermann (2012) showed that student achievement is

positively impacted with increased learning gains when teachers work as a collaborative unit (Carter, Kanold, Toncheff, & Zimmermann, 2012). Erin Rentfro (2007) stated that the PLC model provides schools with the necessary framework to increase instructional practice that result in collaborative efforts aimed at achieving improvements in student learning. Schools throughout the United States have selected this framework as a method to address societal pressures of increased accountability of student achievement. South Elementary in Eldon, Missouri, is just one example of the schools that have selected the PLC framework. South Elementary implemented the PLC framework during the 2003-2004 school year. With an emphasis on the four foundational pillars of effective PLC implementation and targeting the specific needs of each student, Principal Erin Rentfro identified a leadership team to begin the task towards learning communities. By the 2006-2007 school year, South Elementary observed a 12.2% increase of first grade students' level on the Developmental Reading Assessment. Currently, South Elementary is nationally recognized for its success with implementing effective PLCs to positively impact and increase student achievement (Rentfro, 2007). PLCs, when implemented with fidelity, can and do positively impact student achievement.

A key reason South Elementary was able to achieve a successful outcome with the implementation of PLCs was because of the emphasis that was placed on the learning needs of specific students. John Carter, Timothy Kanold, Mona Toncheff, and Gwendolyn Zimmermann (2012) also addressed this important concept. Identifying the specific levels of each student is not used to sort students into ability groups, but rather to guide their individualized instruction. "The current reality of student knowledge and understanding should be used to inform teaching and learning" (Carter, Kanold,

Toncheff, & Zimmermann, 2012, pg. 134). I was particularly attracted to this concept because emphasis was placed on making student learning gains in math, which was one of the content areas in which Middle Senior High School observed a decline in state assessments.

Another component of the impact of PLCs on student learning begins with the process of the teacher evaluation system. The teacher evaluation system within Middle High School District begins with requiring teachers to complete a self-assessment and personal reflection of their personal strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation protocols. Teachers are then required to utilize this self-reflection, as well as the identified learning goals developed within the PLC, to develop their personal annual goal for improving student learning, or their Individual Professional Growth Plan (IPGP). Periodic progress of achieving this goal is documented throughout the school year and is also discussed during collaborative PLCs. The fact that the teachers begin the process with a personal self-reflection, and then continuously reflect throughout the school year collaboratively with their colleagues, student learning is quickly established as a focus during the PLC process.

Teacher evaluation experts, Charlotte Danielson and Thomas McGreal (2000) shared this sentiment. Because teacher evaluations are one of the primary mechanisms for improving instructional practices, it is important that evaluations be designed to also support the growth of individual teachers. Danielson and McGreal shared a belief that this process will be successful if it entails decision making that is completed in a collaborative environment, such as within a PLC. It is also important for teachers to have a systematic method and tool for documenting their progress (Danielson & McGreal,

2000). An example of a method or tool is the IPGP, which is used within MHSD. One of the Deputy Superintendents of MHSD believes that the evaluative component of the IPGP is powerful because it is based on the self-evaluation of each teacher (M. Allen, personal communication, May 17, 2016). I believe that the self-reflection component of the IPGP is a powerful tool which provides teachers with a productive practice towards continuous instructional improvement. This improvement in instructional practices, may lead to improvements in student learning and achievement.

Conclusion

Middle High School District and Middle Senior High School are currently in the third school year of implementation of district and schoolwide PLCs. Reviewing the literature cited here provided me with a deeper contextual understanding of the implementation of Professional Learning Communities. This literature helped me to better understand and shape my program evaluation study on the evaluation of professional learning communities and how they positively benefit student achievement. Shirley Hord summarized the benefits of PLCs best as “a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement” (Hord, 1997, pg. 1). With a structured professional development initiative in place, coupled with a desire to increase student learning gains on state assessments, PLCs provide MHSD and MSHS with the type of powerful tool for change and improvement as described by Hord.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

My purpose for gathering the evidence for my program evaluation was to investigate the fidelity of implementation of Professional Learning Communities at my school. I also investigated any possible relationship between professional development initiatives, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and instructional staff Individual Professional Growth Plans (IPGP) with increased student achievement. It was my desire to employ primary stakeholders such as instructional and non-instructional staff members, district administrators, and school site-based administrators in combination of a formative and summative evaluative purpose approach (Patton, 2008). To appropriately respond to my primary and secondary exploratory questions, my method for gathering data was both qualitative and quantitative.

I gathered qualitative data through the interview process of instructional staff members, school administrators, and district administrators. The interview process provided me with an opportunity to determine how the participants perceived the implementation of PLCs within our school. I gathered quantitative data through the observation of instructional staff members' collaboration during PLC meetings within instructional departments at my school. Survey responses of the participants also provided me with an opportunity to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

Upon receipt of approval and permissions obtained from National-Louis University, I submitted a request to district leadership for permissions to proceed with the proposed program evaluation, because I needed access to student and instructional staff data. Once I was granted all permissions, I began to gather the evidence that addressed

my primary and secondary exploratory questions. I then conducted individual interviews of instructional staff, school administrators, district administrators, and professional development staff. I collaborated with the Director of Professional Development to obtain current and past instructional staff Individual Professional Growth Plans data. I also collaborated with the Director of Secondary Curriculum to obtain current and past student assessment and performance data.

The evidence that answered my primary exploratory questions was survey and interview responses as well as Middle Senior High School (MSHS) instructional staff members Individual Professional Growth Plans. The student achievement data was obtained utilizing the Middle High School Data Management System (MHSDMS), as well as Focus School Software (FOCUS). I conducted surveys and interviews of MSHS instructional staff, MSHS administrators, Middle High School District (MHSD) administrators, and MHSD professional development staff to obtain additional information relevant to my program evaluation.

Participants

The participants in this evaluation were up to five district administrators who oversee the implementation of Professional Learning Communities, up to three school site-based administrators within the targeted school that oversee PLC implementation, and up to 60 instructional staff members from the targeted school. The ages of the adult participants ranged in age from 22 – 80 years of age. The gender of the adult participants was male and female. To ensure that the candidates were chosen fairly, I chose these participants because they all had a different perspective on the implementation of Professional Learning Communities and were key stakeholders in identifying if student

learning gains occurred. I identified the key stakeholders to participate in my study because they were directly involved in the learning process of students. My interaction with the participants took place during non-instructional timeframes, which included but was not limited to before school, after school, during planning periods, or other prearranged and agreed upon timeframes that were requested by the participants.

Because I serve as an administrator at the targeted school, I notified the instructional staff members within the targeted school that participation was voluntary. To ensure that the participants did not feel coerced into participation, I notified each participant that their participation in the survey or interview was on a volunteer basis. I also notified the participants that they may discontinue participation in the survey or interview process at any time during the process.

Data Gathering Techniques

Surveys

I conducted surveys with district level administrators, site-based administrators, and instructional staff members. I gathered qualitative and quantitative data through the completion of surveys, as these forms of data provided me with a deeper understanding of the implementation process of Professional Learning Communities within Middle Senior High School. I used the information obtained from the survey responses to determine the key stakeholders' perception of the impact of Professional Learning Communities.

It was my hope that the Teacher Survey (Appendix A) of up to 60 instructional staff members and the Administrator Survey (Appendix B) of up to five district level administrators and up to three site based school administrators would gather the

perceptions of the instructional staff and administrators in the targeted school regarding the implemented Professional Learning Communities and what they felt were areas of concern. I completed teacher surveys of instructional staff members within the targeted school, district level administrator surveys of district administrators within the targeted school district that oversee the implementation of PLCs throughout the district, and site-based administrator surveys of the targeted school administrators that oversee PLC implementation within the school. I conducted surveys with all key stakeholders utilizing a modified instrument produced by Richard and Rebecca DuFour of Solution Tree. These surveys identified the level of implementation of PLCs within the school and were conducted by me prior to me collecting any other forms of data. I conducted all surveys after each participant completed a consent to participate form, and they occurred during non-instructional or professional development days. I ensured that all stakeholders received the same survey for their respondent group to complete upon receipt of their consent to participate (Appendix C).

Individual Interviews

I believed that the qualitative data obtained from voluntary individual interviews of teachers and administrators would provide me with a deeper understanding of the Professional Learning Communities implementation process within Middle Senior High School. Having the opportunity to obtain primary source information from instructional staff members and administrators provided me with different perspectives of the implementation process. I believed that this would be the most beneficial qualitative data for my program evaluation, as these data were from instructional staff members and administrators from the selected school site.

I collected direct accounts of key stakeholder perceptions from interviews of administrators and instructional staff members. I conducted interviews with administrators and instructional staff members from those who participated in the survey and indicated in writing on the survey that “Yes, I am willing to participate in a 30 minute voluntary interview.” The goal of the completed interviews was to utilize the data to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented Professional Learning Communities within the targeted school. I audio recorded all interviews and transcribed the audio tapes of each participant.

I interviewed up to five district level administrators, up to three site based school administrators, and up to 60 instructional staff members for approximately 30 minutes using the interview protocols (Appendix D: District Level Administrator Protocol, Appendix E: School Site Based Administrator Protocol, and Appendix F: Teacher Interview Protocol). I completed teacher interviews of instructional staff members and site based administrator interviews of administrators within the targeted school, as well as district level administrator interviews of district administrators within the targeted school district that oversee the implementation of PLCs throughout the district, I inquired about the opinions, perceptions, and experiences each key stakeholder had with Professional Learning Communities, and the implantation of the Professional Learning Communities within the targeted school. In the event that additional or clarifying information needed to be obtained, I also included a statement on the informed consent form (Appendix G: Informed Consent Interview) that asked the participants for permission to contact him or her by phone and or email up to five times to clarify any of their interview data later, if need be.

Observations

Observations were an ongoing and continuous process during the data gathering process. I wrote descriptive anecdotal notes on a weekly basis of my observations of Language Arts and Math PLC meetings at Middle Senior High School. I also observed the interactions between teachers within the PLC meetings. My purpose for conducting the observations was to determine if the foundational pillars of PLCs were implemented with fidelity within Middle Senior High School.

I gathered direct accounts of the collaborative encounters of up to 60 instructional staff members while in their perspective Professional Learning Communities for up to five sessions. I observed each PLC session for one hour. The PLCs occurred during non-instructional time periods, so my observations of the PLC sessions did not interfere with instructional time. These timeframes included, but were not limited to, before school, after school, during instructional planning periods, or other prearranged and agreed upon timeframes that were requested by the participants, and that did not interfere with instructional or academic time. I requested to complete the observations for the time period beginning October 1, 2016, through the end of the 2016-17 school year. I gathered data of the interaction of the instructional staff members within their Professional Learning Communities utilizing the developed observation protocol rubric (Appendix H). I asked each teacher that I observed during the PLC sessions to sign an informed consent form (Appendix I).

Document Review

I reviewed the instructional practice data in conjunction with the documented measurable goals of Middle Senior High School teachers within their Individual

Professional Development Plans, obtained from the Research, Evaluations, & Accountability department. I reviewed up to 60 instructional staff member Individual Professional Growth Plans within the targeted middle-high school. I utilized instructional practice data to develop a foundational perspective in determining the effects of the implemented Professional Learning Communities. The results of this program evaluation will be presented to district level administrators to assess the impact of Professional Learning Communities on increased student achievement on state assessments at the targeted school. The estimated time involved to review up to 60 participant IPGPs was approximately 30 minutes each. To ensure that there was no possible interference with normal school activities, my interaction with the participant IPGP data took place during non-instructional timeframes. These timeframes included, but were not limited to, before school, after school, nonacademic times during the course of the school day, or other prearranged and agreed upon timeframes that were requested by Research, Evaluations, and Accountability, and that did not interfere with instructional or academic time.

Student Data

I reviewed student summative and formative assessment data, obtained from the Middle High School District Research, Evaluations, & Accountability department for language arts and math, to identify increases in student achievement. I reviewed statistical academic, formative assessments data, summative assessment data, and state assessment data of all 6th – 12th grade students within the targeted middle-high school. The formative assessments include end-of-quarter exams in algebra 1, algebra 2, geometry, and all administrations of MHSW Writes. The formative assessments also included all teacher created formative assessments in GradeCam. GradeCam is a free

electronic resource secured by MHSD. This resource provides instructional staff with a tool that quickly aggregates student formative assessment data, which can easily be shared electronically within teachers' gradebooks and with instructional PLC members. These formative assessment data can then be analyzed by all members of the PLC. The summative and state assessments would include Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) for algebra 1, algebra 2, geometry, and language arts. These data were reviewed on up to six different occasions after assessment administrations. I utilized these student data to develop a foundational perspective in determining the effects of the implemented Professional Learning Communities. The estimated time involved to review all 6th – 12th grade students' assessment results was approximately 30 minutes each during up to six observation sessions after assessment administrations. To ensure that there was no possible interference with normal school activities, my interaction with the students' assessment data took place during non-instructional timeframes. These timeframes included, but were not limited to, before school, after school, nonacademic times during the course of the school day, or other prearranged and agreed upon timeframes that are requested by Research, Evaluations, and Accountability. They did not interfere with instructional or academic time.

Ethical Considerations

I ensured that ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the program evaluation process. I obtained signed, written permission from all administrative and instructional staff participants that were surveyed, interviewed, and observed during this project evaluation. I provided the consent forms to all participants in person. I gave the Informed Consent Adult Participation Survey form (Appendix C) to all participants to

obtain their written consent to participate in the survey. This provided the participants with an opportunity to pose questions to me that they may have had pertaining to the survey, interview, or observation process. This also provided me with an opportunity to explain the study to all participants. I obtained signed survey consent forms for each of the participants prior to their participation. I asked the participants to sign two consent forms. I kept 1 of the participants' signed forms, and I provided the participants with the second signed form.

I gave the Informed Consent Adult Participant Interview form (Appendix G) and the Informed Consent Adult Participant Professional Learning Communities Observation form (Appendix I) to all participants to obtain their written consent to participate in the voluntary interview process and be observed during up to five PLC sessions. I obtained signed interview consent forms and observation consent forms for each of the participants prior to their participation. I asked the participants to sign two interview consent forms and two observation consent forms. I kept one of the participants' signed interview and observation forms, and I provided the participants with the second signed form.

I gave the Informed Consent School Site Based Administrator form to the targeted school's site based administrator, or administrative designee, to obtain permission to conduct research at the targeted school (Appendix J). I obtained signed, written consent from all administrative and instructional staff participants involved in my project evaluation utilizing approved IRRB informed consent forms. During the process of obtaining written consent and permission, I notified all participants that they had a right to access any of their individual respective collected information during the survey or interview process.

I ensured anonymity was maintained by asking all participants to label all data completed with their current employment title only, such as teacher, school based administrator, or district administrator. I did not list any identifiers, such as names, during the program evaluation project. I ensured that the privacy and confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the study with the incorporation of pseudonyms to represent all participants, as well as the targeted school, and the school district of the targeted school. I also used pseudonyms during the interview and on the transcribed audio tapes and did not list the names of any participants. I also ensured that no participant names were attached to the collected data.

I ensured autonomy was preserved by making participants aware of the voluntary nature of their participation in my program evaluation project verbally and in writing, as well as their ability to discontinue their participation within the project at any time. Because I am an administrator at the targeted school, I also assured participants that there was no pressure or coercion from me for their participation in the program evaluation project. I also asked participants to notify me of their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study by email. This provided participants the ability to make their decision to voluntarily participate, or not to participate, confidential.

Protection of minors was not a factor in my program evaluation project, as I did not incorporate student interviews, nor did students' complete surveys during this evaluation. There was no anticipated emotional, physical, social, or political risk of harm for the voluntary participants during the course of my program evaluation project beyond that of everyday life. Any time research is conducted, there is a potential for unforeseen or unknown consequences for the voluntary participants, such as damage to the personal

character or reputation of a participant. To defend against this form of risk, I did not share data collected with district employees from any surveys or interview protocols. The potential emotional, physical, social, and political benefits to the participants in this study all resonated around the benefit of researched-based information regarding the perceptions and impact of implemented Professional Learning Communities on increasing student achievement.

Voluntary participants obtained benefits from the findings of my program evaluation project, as the evaluation provided information to assist them with the implementation of PLCs to achieve student learning gains. There was also potential benefit for the school district, the targeted school, and the participants within this study. The school district and the targeted school had the opportunity to benefit from being provided with researched-based information regarding a district and school wide implemented professional development initiative aimed at increasing student achievement. It also provided a thorough analysis and insight of the perceptions of instructional staff members within the collaborative Professional Learning Communities. The instructional staff members benefited from having the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the implemented initiative, as well as by having the opportunity to self-reflect on their individual roles within the collaborative efforts of increasing student achievement.

As the researcher, I was the only individual who viewed information about data collected during the surveys and interviews in order to keep all data secure and maintain confidentiality of the responses and participants. Only I had access to all surveys, interview tapes, transcripts, observation rubrics, and field notes. I kept these items in a

locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all surveys, interview tapes, transcripts, observation rubrics, and field notes.

Data Analysis Techniques

Surveys

I analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data from the conducted surveys prior to the initiation of the collection of any other data. I believed the data analysis evaluative process would allow me to discover the personal thoughts and opinions of the voluntary participants, as well as their influence on improved student achievement. I believed the surveys would provide me with the opportunity to analyze the different perspectives of all participants regarding their beliefs of the implementation of Professional Learning Communities within Middle Senior High School. During the data analysis evaluative process, I obtained the opinions of the voluntary participants through survey questions that did not include identifiers other than the employment title of each voluntary participant and their total years in education. I analyzed the qualitative data by looking for trends and similar opinions within each survey response by utilizing the descriptive statistics method. The incorporation of this content analysis method provided me with a strategy to organize the responses from the surveys into tables to determine response frequency. This provided me with the distribution of the responses from the key stakeholders and an opportunity to analyze potential similarities, differences, and potential patterns between the various survey responses of the key stakeholders.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews of the voluntary participants provided me with qualitative data regarding the implementation of Professional Learning Communities within Middle Senior High School. I believed that these data would provide me with the opportunity to analyze for similarities and trends in the responses of the participants. During the data analysis evaluative process, I obtained the opinions of the voluntary participants through open-ended interview questions. I believed that the responses obtained from the voluntary participants during the interview process would provide me with information that would address my posed research questions regarding the implementation of PLCs. I analyzed the qualitative data by looking for trends and emergent themes in the interview transcripts. By coding the instructional and administrative interviews qualitative data, I was able to identify similar patterns that transpired from the collected data of all of the participants. These descriptive data provided me with opportunities to construct conclusions and recommendations regarding the implementation of Professional Learning Communities.

Observations

Throughout the project, I ensured that observations were ongoing and continuous during the data gathering process. The descriptive anecdotal notes completed by me on a weekly basis provided me with insight into the fidelity of the implementation of the key foundational pillars of Professional Learning Communities within Middle Senior High School. These notes also provided me with ongoing opportunities to analyze the PLC implementation. My notes included terms I heard during the observation session that helped me to determine what stage the PLC was operating at during their session. My

observed interactions between teachers within the PLC meetings provided me with opportunities to analyze their level of collaboration. During the data analysis evaluative process, I obtained the opinions of the voluntary participants through an adaptive observation rubric (Appendix H). I analyzed the quantitative data by looking for trends and similar opinions of each completed observation rubric by utilizing the descriptive statistics method. The incorporation of this data analysis method provided me with a strategy to organize the responses from the surveys into tables to determine response frequency. This provided me with the distribution of the responses from the key stakeholders observed during the PLC sessions. This also provided me with an opportunity to analyze potential similarities, differences, and potential patterns between the observed PLC sessions.

Document Review

I analyzed instructional practice data in conjunction with the documented measurable goals of MSHS teachers within their Individual Professional Development Plans, obtained from the Research, Evaluations, & Accountability department. I analyzed the quantitative data by utilizing descriptive statistics that allowed me to identify the mean, median, and mode measurable goal data of each teacher as indicated in their IPDP. I analyzed the qualitative data within each of the IPDPs by researching the trends and similar goals of each teacher within their plan.

Student Data

I reviewed student summative and formative assessment data obtained from the Middle High School District Research, Evaluations, & Accountability department for language arts and math. These data provided me with an opportunity to analyze and

identify increases in student achievement. I used descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative student data that allowed me to identify the mean, median, and mode data of student learning gains on each of the summative and formative assessments.

Conclusion

As a result of this program evaluation project, it was my intention to identify areas of implementation of professional learning communities that may be improved upon to ensure consistency and fidelity. This ultimately revealed correlations between professional development initiatives, such as Professional Learning Communities, and student achievement gains. I conducted surveys, individual interviews, and analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data of Middle Senior High School to clarify if the implemented Professional Learning Communities positively impacted student learning gains.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Findings

For this program evaluation, I studied the implementation of Professional Learning Communities in one school within Middle High School District. To evaluate the fidelity of Professional Learning Communities at Middle Senior High School, I collected and analyzed three types of quantitative and qualitative data: instructional and administrative surveys, instructional and administrative interviews, and direct observations of Professional Learning Communities at Middle Senior High School. Analyzing these data provided me with the opportunity to identify prevalent patterns and themes in the responses received from all of the voluntary respondents. Dr. Richard DuFour (2015) states that PLCs can have positive and impactful effects on improved instructional strategies, as well as overall student learning (DuFour, 2015). My ability to identify common themes and patterns affords me the opportunity to identify potential change recommendations to improve the current PLC implementation practices that are occurring at MSHS, which may ultimately lead to increased student learning.

Teacher Survey

A total of 48 MSHS instructional staff members were invited to complete the teacher survey. A total of 27 instructional staff members, or a response rate of 27 out of 48 (56%), completed the voluntary teacher survey. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this was an acceptable response rate. (See the Teacher Survey in Appendix A.)

In response to the first demographic question, question #1, within my Teacher Survey, the majority of the respondents, or eight respondents (29.6%), were within the

Fine Arts/CTE content areas. Tied for the majority of the respondents, or eight respondents (29.6%), were instructional staff members within the content area of language arts/reading. The third most frequently identified content area, or five respondents (18.5%), were within the content area of math. The next frequently identified respondents, or 3 respondents (11.1%), were teachers within the Science Department. The next frequently identified instructional respondents, or two respondents (7.4%), were teachers within the social studies content area. The least frequent identified respondent, or 1 respondent (3.7%) to complete the Teacher Survey was identified as an Instructional Coach within MSHS. As a result of data from this survey question, I can determine that although the majority of the survey data, or 16 respondents (59.2%), was obtained from instructional staff members within the Fine Arts/CTE and Language Arts/Reading Departments, I was able to obtain important feedback from all instructional content areas within MSHS. Because I have a desire to obtain insight into the school-wide implementation of PLCs within the site school, it was important for me to receive reflective feedback from instructional staff members within all areas of the school. The responses from teacher survey question #1 are posted in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher Survey Question 1: What is your current subject area/title?

Subject Area/Title	Responses	Respondent
Math	18.5%	1, 20, 22, 23, 26,
Fine Arts/CTE	29.6%	2, 5, 9, 10, 13, 17, 21, 27
Language Arts/Reading	29.6%	3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 16, 19, 25,
Science	11.1%	4, 15, 18,
Social Studies	7.4%	6, 14,
Instructional Coach	3.7%	24

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 1.

My second demographic question within my Teacher Survey (Appendix A) provided me with feedback regarding the respondent's total years of experience as an educator. The most frequently reported years of experience of the respondents came from the 8 instructional staff members, or 29.6% of the respondents, who reported being educators for 11-15 years. The second most frequently reported years of educational experience came from the 5 respondents, or 18.5%, who reported being educators for 21-25 years. Tied as the second most frequently reported years of experience within education came from the five respondents, or 18.5%, who reported 6-10 years of educational experience.

The next most frequently reported years of experience was another tie in that three respondents, or 11.1%, reported being in education for 16-20 years and 0-5 years. Finally, I observed a three-way tie with the least frequently reported years of experience. 1 respondent, or 3.7%, reported being an educator for 26-30 years, 31-35 years, and 36-40 years. As a result of data from question #2, I can determine that the majority of the respondents, or 21 respondents (77.7%), have educational experience ranging from 6 to 25 years. These important data assisted me in determining the fidelity of PLC implementation with the participants. As a new educator, I was receptive to educational change. However, as an experienced educator, I can recall specific times where I was more hesitant to being receptive to change. Because of my personal experience as an educator, I anticipated a deep analysis of my collected data to determine if the seasoned instructional staff at MSHS were resistant to the implementation of PLC or if they were receptive to the instructional strategy. The responses from teacher survey question #2 are posted in Table 2.

Table 2

Teacher Survey Question 2: Years of experience in education?

Number of Years	Responses	Respondent
0-5	11.1%	4, 7, 15,
6-10	18.5%	2, 14, 16, 24, 27
11-15	29.6%	5, 6, 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 21
16-20	11.1%	1, 8, 22
21-25	18.5%	3, 12, 23, 25, 26
26-30	3.7%	11
31-35	3.7%	13
36-40	3.7%	17

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 2.

My third and final demographic question within my Teacher Survey (Appendix A) provided me with feedback regarding the Seven Stages of PLCs for each of the respondents. The most frequently reported PLC stage was stage 4: with 15 respondents, or 55.7%, reported their current PLC was operating. The second most frequently reported PLC stage was stage 5: with seven respondents, or 25.9%, reported their PLC was operating. The next most frequently reported PLC stage was stage 3: with four respondents, or 14.8%, reported their PLC was operating. The least frequently reported PLC stage was stage 2: with one respondent, or 3.7%, felt his or her current PLC was operating. None of the 27 respondents reported a PLC stage of stage 1, stage 6, or stage 7. As a result of these data from question #3, I determined the majority of the PLC members, 15 respondents (55.6%) reported being in a PLC that was at the current stage that mirrored the overall PLC stage of MHSD, stage 4. These data also allowed me to determine all 27 of the respondents, or 100%, reported operating within a PLC beyond stage 1. With this percentage of the overall instructional staff members at MSHS reporting that they are operating within a PLC, I am informed that the implementation process of PLC occurred. This notifies me that the percentage of participants are working

collaboratively within their content areas beyond stage 1, with established norms. The largest percentage of the participants have achieved the most critical stage in the PLC process, stage 4, where teachers work collaboratively to establish common assessments. The responses from teacher survey question #3 are posted in Table 3.

Table 3

Teacher Survey Question 3: According to the “Seven Stages of PLC’s” at what stage is your current PLC operating?

PLC Stage	Responses	Respondent
1	0%	N/A
2	3.7%	13
3	14.8%	2, 5, 17, 19
4	55.6%	1, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27
5	25.9%	3, 8, 9, 14, 20, 21, 25
6	0%	N/A
7	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 3.

The remainder of my teacher survey consisted of specific probing statements designed to generate responses from MSHS instructional staff. The collected responses provided me with a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to the implementation of PLCs at MSHS. In response to survey question #4 (I actively contribute within my Professional Learning Community), the most frequently reported response indicated by 15 instructional staff members, or 55.6%, was that they agree with the posed statement. The remaining 12 respondents, or 44.4%, reported they strongly agree with question #4. These were noteworthy data for me in my program evaluation of implemented PLCs because these data indicated that all 27 respondents, or 100% of the instructional staff members, reported they are actively contributing during the PLC process. I was able to determine that all of the respondents felt that PLCs were implemented. Now that I could determine that PLCs were implemented within MSHS, I

am in position to analyze the data further to determine the level of fidelity of the implementation of PLCs. I can also analyze how beneficial the participants reported their participation within PLCs was in relation to student learning. The responses from teacher survey question #4 are posted in Table 4.

Table 4

Teacher Survey Question 4: I actively contribute within my Professional Learning Community.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	44.4%	1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 24, 26,
Agree	55.6%	4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 4.

In response to survey question #5 (Professional Learning Communities have been implemented with fidelity within my school), the most frequently reported response indicated that 16 instructional staff members, or 59.3%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that 7 instructional staff members, or 25.9%, agree with the posed statement. The third most frequently reported response indicated that 4 instructional staff members, or 14.8%, were not sure if PLCs were implemented with fidelity within MSHS. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the posed statement. Although the vast majority of the respondents reported that they strongly agreed with the posed statement, my attention was drawn to the four respondents that were unsure. Identifying these data led me to question myself in regard to the strength of the posed survey question. From these data, I can infer that because the respondents do not interact with PLCs beyond their assigned content area, they did not have a clear

understanding of the implementation of PLCs within MSHS. Although the respondents were aware of the implementation process for their individual PLC, they were unaware of how the process for other PLC areas. The responses from teacher survey question #5 are posted in Table 5.

Table 5

Teacher Survey Question 5: Professional Learning Communities have been implemented with fidelity within my school.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	59.3%	2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27
Agree	25.9%	5, 6, 7, 15, 16, 18, 23
Not Sure	14.8%	1, 13, 19, 22
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 5.

In response to survey question #6 (Individual Professional Development Plans are implemented with consistency within my school), the most frequently reported response indicated that 11 instructional staff members, or 40.7%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that nine instructional staff members, or 33.3%, agree with the posed statement. The third most frequently reported response indicated that five instructional staff members, or 18.5%, were not sure if PLCs were implemented with fidelity within MSHS. The remaining two respondents, or 7.4%, reported that they disagreed with the posed statement. These data were substantial for me because I was able to determine that over 85% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that consistent practices and structures were in place at MSHS regarding IPDPs. These are important data because they provide me with insight in the willingness of the participants to establish a professional goal geared towards improving best practice

strategies that affect student learning. The responses from teacher survey question #6 are posted in Table 6.

Table 6

Teacher Survey Question 6: Individual Professional Development Plans are implemented with consistency within my school.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	40.7%	2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 21, 24
Agree	33.3%	3, 5, 6, 16, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27
Not Sure	18.5%	1, 7, 10, 22, 23
Disagree	7.4%	13, 15
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 6.

In response to survey question #7 (Teachers within my school work collaboratively to develop student common assessments), the most frequently reported response indicated that 12 instructional staff members, or 44.4%, agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that six instructional staff members, or 22.2%, were not sure if common assessments were developed as a result of teachers working collaboratively within MSHS. The third most frequently reported response indicated that five instructional staff members, or 18.5%, disagree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that 4 instructional staff members, or 14.8%, strongly agree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed with the posed statement. The majority of the participants previously reported that they were at a PLC stage 4, were common assessments are developed.

Data from survey question #7 are consistent with the previously determined data in that the majority of the participants strongly agreed or agreed with the posed statement. As the principal of MSHS, it is important for me to determine that the established PLCs

are operating appropriately within the identified stages. If the appropriate and targeted work of the PLC is not occurring, the fidelity of the PLC implementation can be impacted. The responses from teacher survey question #7 are posted in Table 7.

Table 7

Teacher Survey Question 7: Teachers within my school work collaboratively to develop student common assessments.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	14.8%	2, 4, 9, 17
Agree	44.4%	1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21, 25, 26
Not Sure	22.2%	5, 14, 19, 22, 23, 27
Disagree	18.5%	7, 13, 15, 18, 24
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 7.

In response to survey question #8 (Teachers within my school work collaboratively to improve instruction), the most frequently reported response indicated that 17 instructional staff members, or 63.0%, agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that 7 instructional staff members, or 25.9%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The third most frequently reported response indicated that three instructional staff members, or 11.1%, disagree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure or strongly disagreed with the posed statement.

Data from survey question #8 were substantial for me because I was able to determine that the majority of the participants, or almost 90%, strongly agreed or agreed with the posed statement. Research shows that when instructional staff members work collaboratively to improve instruction, increased student academic gains are potential in areas such as math (Hord, 1997). As the principal, one of my primary goals is to achieve

improved student achievement in content areas, such as math. The responses from teacher survey question #8 are posted in Table 8.

Table 8

Teacher Survey Question 8: Teachers within my school work collaboratively to improve instruction.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	25.9%	2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 17, 25
Agree	63.0%	1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	11.1%	7, 13, 19
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 8.

In response to survey question #9 (My Professional Learning Community impacted my Individual Professional Development Plan), the most frequently reported response indicated that 12 instructional staff members, or 44.4%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that 7 instructional staff members, or 25.9%, disagree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that five instructional staff members, or 18.5%, were not sure if their IPDP was impacted by their PLC. The fourth most frequently reported response indicated that three instructional staff members, or 11.1%, strongly agree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed with the posed statement. Although the vast majority of the respondents agreed with the posed statement, the portion of data that is most important to me is the participants that disagreed with the statement. As a school leader, it is important for me to ensure that all of my instructional staff have a thorough understanding of the connection between working collaboratively within their PLC and developing their personal professional growth goal. The responses from teacher survey question #9 are posted in Table 9.

Table 9

Teacher Survey Question 9: My Professional Learning Community impacted my Individual Professional Development Plan.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	11.1%	4, 12, 17,
Agree	44.4%	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27
Not Sure	18.5%	2, 8, 20, 23, 24
Disagree	25.9%	6, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 9.

In response to survey question #10 (The implementation of Professional Learning Communities facilitates increased student achievement), the most frequently reported response indicated that 11 instructional staff members, or 40.7%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that 9 instructional staff members, or 33.3%, were not sure if increased student achievement resulted as a result of implemented PLCs. The next frequently reported response indicated that five instructional staff members, or 18.5%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The fourth most frequently reported response indicated that two instructional staff members, or 7.4%, disagree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed with the posed statement. After reviewing the results of survey question #10, this information is useful to me because the primary reason MSHS implemented PLCs was to achieve increased student achievement. If the respondents are unsure or do not agree that student achievement increases are achieved through incorporated PLCs, then I feel obligated to review the purpose of PLCs with my staff. If instructional staff members do not believe in the value of PLCs, or the potential benefit PLCs could have on improving student learning, then attaining true

fidelity within a PLC would be difficult. The responses from teacher survey question #10 are posted in Table 10.

Table 10

Teacher Survey Question 10: The implementation of Professional Learning Communities facilitates increased student achievement.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	18.5%	3, 4, 9, 12, 17,
Agree	40.7%	5, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26
Not Sure	33.3%	1, 2, 7, 11, 13, 19, 23, 24, 27
Disagree	7.4%	6, 18,
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 10.

In response to survey question #11 (Teachers within my school meet a minimum of one hour weekly within their Professional Learning Community), the most frequently reported response indicated that 22 instructional staff members, or 81.5%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that 5 instructional staff members, or 18.5%, agree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure about the posed statement, nor did they strongly disagree or disagree with the posed statement. These data are substantial for me because as the principal leading the PLC efforts within MSHS, I was able to determine that 100% of the participants are attending their established content area or art area PLC. This was not always the case at MSHS. Prior to my appointment as principal, teachers did not meet in PLCs. I believe that these data are reliable. The instructional staff completed the survey anonymously. Also, members of the leadership team attend all of the PLCs, so I have observed instructional staff attending their assigned PLC. The responses from teacher survey question #11 are posted in Table 11.

Table 11

Teacher Survey Question 11: Teachers within my school meet a minimum of one hour weekly within their Professional Learning Community.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	81.5%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
Agree	18.5%	13, 15, 16, 18, 22
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 11.

In response to survey question #12 (Although my school has implemented Professional Learning Communities, teachers participate out of compliance rather than commitment), the most frequently reported response indicated that nine instructional staff members, or 33.3%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that instructional staff members, or 22.2%, both strongly agreed with the posed statement and disagreed with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that five instructional staff members, or 18.5%, were not sure if teachers within MSHS participate within their PLC out of compliance or commitment. The least frequently reported response indicated that 1 instructional staff members, or 3.7%, strongly disagree with the posed statement.

These data are important for me because of the high percentage of respondents that reported attending PLCs out of compliance. The intent of PLCs is for instructional staff members to work collaboratively with colleagues to improve instructional practices and impact student learning. If the respondents feel as though they are attending PLCs as a requirement, they are missing the true intent of the purpose of PLCs. As the school leader, I have developed a schedule that provides teachers with opportunities to meet within their PLC. Now, I need to establish a schoolwide culture that truly understands the

benefits and purpose of commitment to PLCs. The responses from teacher survey question #12 are posted in Table 12.

Table 12

Teacher Survey Question 12: Although my school has implemented Professional Learning Communities, teachers participate out of compliance rather than commitment.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	22.2%	6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 23,
Agree	33.3%	1, 2, 10, 11, 13, 15, 21, 22, 24,
Not Sure	18.5%	5, 16, 17, 20, 25
Disagree	22.2%	3, 9, 12, 14, 26, 27
Strongly Disagree	3.7%	4

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 12.

In response to survey question #13 (Teachers within my school are committed to Professional Learning Communities as an important factor in attaining increased student achievement), the most frequently reported response indicated that 10 instructional staff members, or 37.0%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that 7 instructional staff members, or 25.9%, were unsure if teachers within MSHS were committed to PLCs as an important factor when attaining increased student achievement. The third most frequently reported response indicated that five instructional staff members, or 18.5%, disagree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that four instructional staff members, or 14.8%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The least frequently reported response indicated that 1 instructional staff members, or 3.7%, strongly disagree with the posed statement.

After reviewing survey question #13 data, this information is useful to me because I am able to determine that the majority of the respondents are committed to PLCs. I am also able to infer that the majority of the respondents have an

understanding of the true purpose and intent for the implemented PLCs. Finally, I am able to infer that the majority of the respondents believe that PLCs are an effective strategy to achieve improved learning gains. I was also able to infer that the majority of the respondents share my vision and mindset for engaging in an instructional practice that focuses on improving overall student growth. The responses from teacher survey question #13 are posted in Table 13.

Table 13

Teacher Survey Question 13: Teachers within my school are committed to Professional Learning Communities as an important factor in attaining increased student achievement.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	14.8%	4, 9, 12, 24,
Agree	37.0%	2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 14, 16, 17, 20, 27
Not Sure	25.9%	1, 10, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26
Disagree	18.5%	7, 13, 15, 18, 19
Strongly Disagree	3.7%	6

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 13.

In response to survey question #14 (Teachers within my school perceive that Professional Learning Communities truly function as they are intended to function), the most frequently reported response indicated that 12 instructional staff members, or 44.4%, were unsure if teachers perceived that PLCs functioned as they were intended to function within MSHS. The second most frequently reported response indicated that 9 instructional staff members, or 33.3%, agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that 5 instructional staff members, or 18.5%, disagree with the posed statement. The least frequently reported response indicated that 1 instructional staff members, or 3.7%, strongly agree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed with the posed statement.

After reviewing survey question #14 data, I can determine that this information is important because if the majority of the respondents are unsure if PLCs are functioning properly, fidelity of implemented PLCs may not exist at MSHS. In order for me to determine if PLCs have been implemented with fidelity, I will need to address the uncertainty of the instructional staff members. A poorly functioning PLC can be detrimental to student achievement. The responses from teacher survey question #14 are posted in Table 14.

Table 14

Teacher Survey Question 14: Teachers within my school perceive that Professional Learning Communities truly function as they are intended to function.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	3.7%	4
Agree	33.3%	3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 24, 27
Not Sure	44.4%	1, 2, 5, 10, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26
Disagree	18.5%	6, 7, 15, 18, 19,
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 14.

In response to survey question #15 (Teachers within my school perceive effective support from school based administrators within Professional Learning Communities), the most frequently reported response indicated that 12 instructional staff members, or 44.4%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that eight instructional staff members, or 29.6%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that seven instructional staff members, or 25.9%, were unsure if teachers within MSHS perceived effective support from school based administrators within PLCs. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the posed statement.

In review of these data, I was able to determine that the majority of the respondents perceived effective support from administrators within MSHS. As the principal, it is important for the instructional staff to have my support. This is especially important during our PLC implementation process. As the school leader, I have to set the precedence of my belief in the PLC process, as well as demonstrate my support of instructional staff as they embark in the process. I also must identify areas where staff members feel additional support is needed or not sufficient. One of the benefits of PLCs is the collaborative support that comes with the process. A substantial number of the respondents' felt that this essential support was insufficient. The responses from teacher survey question #15 are posted in Table 15.

Table 15

Teacher Survey Question 15: Teachers within my school perceive effective support from school based administrators within Professional Learning Communities.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	29.6%	2, 4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 24
Agree	44.4%	1, 3, 6, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27
Not Sure	25.9%	5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 19
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 15.

In response to survey question #16 (Teachers within my school perceive that school based administrators communicate a clear vision, mission, and goal regarding Professional Learning Communities), the most frequently reported response indicated that 14 instructional staff members, or 51.6%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that 11 instructional staff members, or 40.7%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that two instructional staff members, or 7.4%, were unsure if teachers within

MHS perceived that school based administrators communicated a clear PLC vision, mission, and goal. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the posed statement.

After reviewing data for survey question #16, I was able to determine that the data was important because the majority of the respondents indicated that I established a clear purpose for PLCs. As a new administrator, I always make it a priority to provide the reasons why I promote an initiative. In all my actions, I make it a point to ensure that my actions and beliefs always have a focus on the students and increasing learning for the students. These data are encouraging because they allowed me to determine that I was able to establish a clear understanding regarding the true vision, mission, and goal of PLCs at MSHS. The responses from teacher survey question #16 are posted in Table 16.

Table 16

Teacher Survey Question 16: Teachers within my school perceive that school based administrators communicate a clear vision, mission, and goal regarding Professional Learning Communities.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	40.7%	2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 20, 21, 24,
Agree	51.6%	1, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27
Not Sure	7.4%	13, 19
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 27 of 27 participants responded to Teacher Survey Question 16.

Administrator Survey

Five administrators were invited to complete the administrator survey. Three of the administrators were from MHSD, while the remaining 2 administrators were from MSHS. All 5 administrators, or a response rate of 5 out of 5, completed the voluntary

administrator survey. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this was an acceptable response rate (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

In response to the first demographic question within my Administrator Survey (Appendix B), the majority of the respondents, or three respondents (60%), were district administrators within MHSD. The next most frequently identified group, or two respondents (40%), were site based administrators within MSHS. It was important for me to obtain responses from both district and site based administrators to determine consistency or inconsistency regarding their views pertaining to PLCs. To have successful PLC implementation, it is important to have a clear and concise vision, mission, and goal spearheaded by leadership. The responses from administrator survey question #1 are posted in Table 17.

Table 17

Administrator Survey Question 1: What is your current job title?

Subject Area/Title	Responses	Respondent
Site Based Administrator	40%	4, 5
District Level Administrator	60%	1, 2, 3

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 1.

My second demographic question within my Administrator Survey provided me with feedback regarding the respondent's total years of experience as an educator and administrator. The most frequently reported years of experience of the respondents came from the three administrators, or 60% of the respondents, who reported being educators for 21-31 years. The second most frequently reported years of educational experience came from the two respondents, or 40%, who reported being educators for 10-20 years.

These data were important because I was able to determine that all of the respondents were seasoned administrations. I was also able to determine that all of the

respondents were administrators prior to the implementation of PLCs in Middle High School District. This will be important for me to determine their perspective on student achievement now that PLCs have been incorporated. The responses from administrator survey question #2 are posted in Table 18.

Table 18

Administrator Survey Question 2: Years of experience in education?

Number of Years	Responses	Respondent
0-10 Years	0%	N/A
10-20 Years	40%	1, 4
21-31 Years	60%	2, 3, 5

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 2.

My third and final demographic question within my Administrator Survey provided me with feedback regarding the Seven Stages of PLCs for each of the respondents. There was a tie for the most frequently reported PLC stage between stage 4: with two respondents, or 40%, and stage 5: with two respondents, or 40%. The next most frequently reported PLC stage was stage 6: with one respondent, or 20%. None of the five respondents reported a PLC stage of stage 1, stage 2, stage 3, or stage 7.

After reviewing data for administrative survey question #3, I was able to determine similarities between the way the administrators responded and the way that the instructional staff responded in the teacher survey. It was important for me to identify any relation between the district PLC stage and the overall mean PLC stage at MSHS, stage 4. The responses from administrator survey question #3 are posted in Table 19.

Table 19

Administrator Survey Question 3: According to the “Seven Stages of PLC’s” at what stage is your current school/district PLC operating at?

PLC Stage	Responses	Respondent
1	0%	N/A
2	0%	N/A
3	0%	N/A
4	40%	2, 3
5	40%	4, 5
6	20%	1
7	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 3.

The remainder of my administrator survey consisted of specific probing statements designed to generate responses from MSHS administrators and MHSD administrators. The collected responses provided me with a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to the implementation of PLCs at MSHS. In response to survey question #4 (My school/district has a clear mission, vision, and goal regarding Professional Learning Communities), the most frequently reported response indicated by four administrators, or 80%, was that they strongly agree with the posed statement. The remaining 1 respondent, or 20%, reported they agree with question #4. These were important data for me in my program evaluation of implemented PLCs because these data indicated that all five respondents, or 100% of the administrators, reported they agree that the targeted school and district has an established PLC mission, vision, and goal.

These data are important to me because I was able to determine that 100% of the administrative respondents agreed that MHSD had an established plan for implementing PLCs. I was also able to determine that these data were similar to the instructional staff respondents’ data, where the majority of the respondents, or 92.3%,

strongly agreed or agreed with the posed statement. These were noteworthy data for me because it is critically important for administrators to develop and share a clear vision when implementing a change, such as professional learning communities (Kotter, 1996). The responses from administrator survey question #4 are posted in Table 20.

Table 20

Administrator Survey Question 4: My school/district has a clear mission, vision, and goal regarding Professional Learning Communities.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	80%	1, 3, 4, 5
Agree	20%	2
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 4.

In response to administrator survey question #5 (Professional Learning Communities have been implemented with fidelity within my school/district), the most frequently reported response indicated that four administrators, or 80%, agree with the posed statement. The one remaining administrator, or 20%, strongly agreed with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure if PLCs were implemented with fidelity within MSHS, nor did they strongly disagree or disagree with the posed statement.

After reviewing the data for administrator survey question #5, I was able to determine that these data were important because I determined that every administrative response coincided with the majority of the instructional staff member respondents, or 85.2%. As I continue to analyze my collected data, being able to determine that both instructional and administrative respondents shared similar responses allowed me to infer

that the districtwide PLC initiative was being communicated to both administrative and instructional staff at MSHS. Collaborative practices to address student achievement were in place at MSHS. The responses from administrator survey question #5 are posted in Table 21.

Table 21

Administrator Survey Question 5: Professional Learning Communities have been implemented with fidelity within my school/district.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	20%	4
Agree	80%	1, 2, 3, 5
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 5.

In response to administrator survey question #6 (Individual Professional Development Plans are implemented with consistency within my school/district), the most frequently reported response indicated that two administrators, or 40%, were unsure if consistency of implemented IPDPs were present in MSHS. There was a three-way tie for the next most frequently reported response. One administrator, or 20%, strongly agreed, agreed, and disagreed with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed with the posed statement.

These data are important for me because I was able to determine inconsistencies with the administrative respondents regarding this posed statement, just as I was able to determine inconsistencies in the responses from the instructional respondents. When implementing an initiative, it is important to ensure an initial goal and purpose to achieve a consistent message. These data make me question the level of understanding both instructional staff and administrators have regarding the

implemented IPDPs. The responses from administrator survey question #6 are posted in Table 22.

Table 22

Administrator Survey Question 6: Individual Professional Development Plans are implemented with consistency within my school/district.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	20%	4
Agree	20%	5
Not Sure	40%	1, 2,
Disagree	20%	3,
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 6.

In response to administrator survey question #7 (Teachers within my school/district work collaboratively to develop common assessments), the most frequently reported response indicated that three administrators, or 60%, agree with the posed statement. The second most frequently reported response indicated that two administrators, or 40%, strongly agree with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure regarding teachers working to develop common assessments collaboratively, nor did they strongly disagree or disagree with the posed statement.

After reviewing data from administrator survey question #7, I was able to determine that all of the respondents felt that the implemented PLCs had reached a pivotal stage in the implementation process, stage 4. When PLCs reach stage 4, instructional staff members are at a point where they are working collaboratively to develop common assessments. This is also the stage where student learning and achievement begin to be monitored and impacted (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015). The responses from administrator survey question #7 are posted in Table 23.

Table 23

Administrator Survey Question 7: Teachers within my school/district work collaboratively to develop common assessments.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	40%	1, 4
Agree	60%	2, 3, 5
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 7.

In response to administrator survey question #8 (Teachers within my school/district work collaboratively to improve instruction), the most frequently reported response indicated that three administrators, or 60%, agree with the posed statement. The remaining two administrators, or 40%, strongly agreed with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure if teachers worked collaboratively to improve instruction within MSHS, nor did they strongly disagree or disagree with the posed statement. These data are important for me because I was able to determine that all of the administrative respondents believed that instructional staff members within MSHS and MHSD are working together to positively enhance instructional practices. As the principal of MSHS, one of my ultimate goals is to improve overall student achievement. Research notifies me that one of the greatest impacts on student achievement is the presence of a highly qualified instructor (PSA, November 2005). When teachers work collaboratively within PLCs, they are afforded opportunities to improve instruction, and their effectiveness as an impactful teacher. The responses from administrator survey question #8 are posted in Table 24.

Table 24

Administrator Survey Question 8: Teachers within my school/district work collaboratively to improve instruction.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	40%	1, 2
Agree	60%	3, 4, 5
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 8.

In response to administrator survey question #9 (Professional Learning Communities impact teacher Individual Professional Development Plans), the most frequently reported response indicated that two administrators, or 40%, strongly agree with the statement. Tied for the most frequently reported response with two administrators, or 40%, were administrators who were unsure if PLCs impacted instructional IPDPs. The next frequently reported response indicated that one administrator, or 20%, agreed with the statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly disagree or disagreed with the statement.

After reviewing data for administrator survey question #9, I was able to determine that there is a disconnect in the understanding of PLC impact on IPDP's. Response data from this survey question mirrored the instructional respondents' survey data regarding a percentage of respondents not being sure if the two factors, PLCs and IPDPS, have an effect on one another. The research of Joshua Angrist and Victor Lavy (2001) states that there is a positive correlation between improved student achievement and ongoing professional development agendas for individual instructors (Angrist & Lavy, 2001). With such a substantial number of respondents who were unsure of the impact of IPDPs, these data leave me with a question that I will research further: Do PLCs truly affect the

strength and validity of instructional staff members' IPDPs? The responses from administrator survey question #9 are in Table 25.

Table 25

Administrator Survey Question 9: Professional Learning Communities impact teacher Individual Professional Development Plans.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	40%	4, 5
Agree	20%	3
Not Sure	40%	1, 2
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 9.

In response to administrator survey question #10 (The implementation of Professional Learning Communities facilitates increased student achievement), the most frequently reported response indicated that four administrators, or 80%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The remaining 1 administrator, or 20%, agreed with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure if PLCs led to increased student achievement, nor did they strongly disagree or disagree with the posed statement.

These were important data for me because as an administrator within MHSD, and as the principal of MSHS, I want to be assured that my district leadership and colleagues have confidence in the implemented instructional initiatives. This is especially the case when research has determined that the initiative, such as PLCs, can lead to increased student achievement (Carter et al., 2012). The responses from administrator survey question #10 are posted in Table 26.

Table 26

Administrator Survey Question 10: The implementation of Professional Learning Communities facilitates increased student achievement.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	80%	1, 2, 3, 5
Agree	20%	4
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 10.

In response to administrator survey question #11 (Teachers within my school/district meet a minimum of one hour weekly within Professional Learning Communities), the most frequently reported response indicated that three administrators, or 60%, strongly agree with the posed statement. The remaining two administrators, or 40%, agreed with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they were unsure if teachers met a minimum of 1 hour weekly within PLCs, nor did they strongly disagree or disagree with the posed statement. After reviewing data for administrator survey question #11, I was able to conclude that teachers within MHSD, and MSHS appear to be meeting within PLCs. In the past, teachers were not meeting in PLCs at MSHS. This data notified me that the PLC implementation process had led to changes in past instructional practices at MSHS. Instead of planning in isolation, teachers at MSHS are not collaborating within their PLCs with colleagues. Responses from administrator survey question #11 are posted in Table 27.

Table 27

Administrator Survey Question 11: Teachers within my school/district meet a minimum of one hour weekly within Professional Learning Communities.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	60%	2, 4, 5
Agree	40%	1, 3
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 11.

In response to administrator survey question #12 (Although my school/district has implemented Professional Learning Communities, it is perceived that teachers participate out of compliance rather than commitment) the most frequently reported response indicated that three administrators, or 60%, disagree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that two administrators, or 40%, were not sure if teachers participate within PLCs out of compliance or commitment. None of the respondents reported that they strongly agreed, agreed, or strongly disagreed with the posed statement.

These data were important for me because they allowed me to determine that the administrator perspective pertaining to this posed question is the opposite of the instructional staff members' perspective regarding this same posed question. As an administrator at MSHS, these data tell me that if teachers are to gain an appreciation for the instructional benefits of PLCs, it is important for me to effectively communicate the benefits of PLCs to my instructional staff members. Otherwise, the instructional staff will continue to attend PLCs to avoid being defiant to an administrative initiative. Although the administrators believe teachers are participating in PLCs because of their commitment to increased student achievement, my

instructional staff did not share this same sentiment. The responses from administrator survey question #12 are posted in Table 28.

Table 28

Administrator Survey Question 12: Although my school/district has implemented Professional Learning Communities, it is perceived that teachers participate out of compliance rather than commitment.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	0%	N/A
Agree	0%	N/A
Not Sure	40%	3, 4
Disagree	60%	1, 2, 5
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 12.

In response to administrator survey question #13 (Teachers within my school/district are committed to Professional Learning Communities as an important factor in attaining increased student achievement), the most frequently reported response indicated that 4 administrators, or 80%, agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that 1 administrator, or 20%, was unsure with the posed statement. None of the respondents reported that they strongly agree, strongly disagree, or disagree with the posed statement.

After reviewing data from administrator survey question #13, I was able to determine that administrators perceived that instructional staff members throughout MHSD viewed PLCs as an appropriate strategy for achieving student learning gains. In comparison to the teacher survey data regarding this posed question, this data is not consistent: in that almost 50% of the instructional staff members were unsure or did not agree with the posed statement. These data lead me to again question if instructional staff members within MSHS understand the true intent of PLCs. The responses from administrator survey question #13 are posted in Table 29.

Table 29

Administrator Survey Question 13: Teachers within my school/district are committed to Professional Learning Communities as an important factor in attaining increased student achievement.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	0%	N/A
Agree	80%	1, 2, 3, 5
Not Sure	20%	4
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 13.

In response to administrator survey question #14 (Teachers within my school/district perceive that Professional Learning Communities truly function as they are intended to function), the most frequently reported response indicated that all five administrators, or 100%, agree with the posed statement. These data are important because they allowed me to determine a misperception regarding the administrator responses and the instructional staff responses. As an administrator, it is important for me to not only establish a vision pertaining to PLCs, but to also ensure that my instructional staff understand and share the same vision. These data allowed me to determine that this is not the case at MSHS. The responses from administrator survey question #14 are posted in Table 30.

Table 30

Administrator Survey Question 14: Teachers within my school/district perceive that Professional Learning Communities truly function as they are intended to function.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	0%	N/A
Agree	100%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 14.

In response to administrator survey question #15 (Administrators hold all members of Professional Learning Communities accountable for clear and appropriate standards of performance), the most frequently reported response indicated that 4 administrators, or 80%, agree with the posed statement. The next frequently reported response indicated that 1 administrator, or 20%, were unsure if administrators held all PLC members accountable. None of the respondents reported that they strongly agree, strongly disagree, or disagree with the posed statement. These data were important because they provided me with another opportunity to determine the consistency of PLC implementation. In order for a new initiative to be successful, consistency should occur in all levels of the process. Inconsistencies can lead to ineffectiveness within the initiative. In the case of PLC implementation, inconsistencies can prevent opportunities for increased student learning. The responses from administrator survey question #15 are posted in Table 31.

Table 31

Administrator Survey Question 15: Administrators hold all members of Professional Learning Communities accountable for clear and appropriate standards of performance.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	0%	N/A
Agree	80%	1, 2, 4, 5
Not Sure	20%	3
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 15.

In response to administrator survey question #16 (Administrators hold all members of Professional Learning Communities accountable for student achievement), the most frequently reported response indicated that all five administrators, or 100%, agree with the posed statement. These data are important to me because achieving

successful PLCs requires accountability from both instructional and administrative PLC members. To achieve an effective culture of schoolwide PLCs, administrators must be active participants within PLCs. The accountability should begin with administrators. These data allowed me to determine that the administrative respondents understand the concept of being members of PLCs themselves. These data correlate with the majority of the instructional staff members' responses, Teacher Interview Question #10. The responses from administrator survey question #16 are posted in Table 32.

Table 32

Administrator Survey Question 16: Administrators hold all members of Professional Learning Communities accountable for student achievement.

Answer Choices	Responses	Respondent
Strongly Agree	0%	N/A
Agree	100%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Not Sure	0%	N/A
Disagree	0%	N/A
Strongly Disagree	0%	N/A

Note: 5 of 5 participants responded to Administrator Survey Question 16.

Teacher Interviews

A total of 10 MSHS instructional staff members accepted the invitation to participate in the teacher interview process. This was 10 instructional staff members out of the 27 that completed the teacher survey. A response rate of 10 out of 27 (37%), agreed to complete the interview in a face-to-face audio-recorded process. The range of the interviews was 18 minutes to 65 minutes in length, with the average length of the interviews at 42 minutes.

In response to interview question #1 (What do you think are the greatest advantages of Professional Learning Communities?) within my Teacher Interview Protocol (Appendix F), the most frequently reported theme was Collaboration. Nine of the respondents, or 90%,

suggested that collaborating with their colleagues was beneficial for them. These data allowed me to determine that the respondents viewed opportunities to engage in tasks such as group lesson planning and developing common assessments as beneficial. There was a two-way tie in the next frequently reported theme. Time to Meet and Learn From Colleagues both were identified by three respondents, or 30%. These data suggest that the respondents highly regarded opportunities to gain knowledge regarding instructional practices from their colleagues, as well as having designated time to engage in the learning opportunities within their PLCs. The least frequently reported theme was Increase Student Learning, where two of the respondents or 20% suggest that opportunities for increased student achievement are facilitated due to their engagement in PLCs. As a result of the data from teacher interview question #1, I can determine that all of the respondents perceived that the implemented PLCs were beneficial for them personally, or as a favorable strategy to improve student learning. I can also determine that the majority of the instructional staff favor working as a collective unit rather than in isolation. As the school principal, I can infer that the professional development initiatives that target the benefits of working in collaborative have been beneficial for my instructional staff. The responses from teacher interview question #1 are posted in Table 33.

Table 33

Teacher Interview Question 1: What do you think are the greatest advantages of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Collaboration	90%	A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, J
Increase Student Learning	20%	D, G
Learn From Colleagues	30%	C, I, J
Time to Meet	30%	A, H, J

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 1.

In response to interview question #2 (How long have you been participating in a Professional Learning Community?) within my Teacher Interview Protocol (Appendix F), the most frequently reported category was 3-5 Years, where five respondents, or 50% have participated within a PLC. These data suggest that the respondents may have been instructional staff members since MHSD implemented districtwide PLCs during the 2013-2014 school year. There was a two-way tie for the next most frequently reported category. Two respondents, or 20%, identified working within PLCs 2 years or less, as well as 6-8 years. These data suggest that the respondents began employment after PLCs were implemented schoolwide at MSHS, or the respondents were instructional staff members prior to the implementation of PLCs within MSHS. The least frequently reported category, 9-12 years (10%), suggests that the respondent has been employed within an educational setting prior to PLCs being implemented within MSHS and MHSD. As a result, these data from teacher interview question #2 seem to confirm the opportunity for one reported benefit of PLCs: teachers working in collaboration can be advantageous because it provides opportunities for teachers to “look deeply into the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work with students (Hierck & Williams, 2015, p. 2). When I consider the vast background and experiences of the teachers, this increases the benefit of the opportunity for them to learn from one another. The vast backgrounds and experiences of the respondents can provide respondents availability to an assortment of instructional practices. The responses from teacher interview question #2 are posted in Table 34.

Table 34

Teacher Interview Question 2: How long have you been participating in a Professional Learning Community?

Themes (Yrs In PLC)	Responses	Respondent
0-2 Years	20%	E, J
3-5 Years	50%	A, B, C, D, H
6-8 Years	20%	F, G
9-12 Years	10%	I

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 2.

In response to interview question #3 (As a result from participating in a Professional Learning Community, what do you perceive as some of the greatest benefits or advantages that a PLC offers?), the most frequently reported theme was Collaboration. Nine of the respondents, or 90%, perceived that collaborating with their colleagues was the greatest benefit or advantage of the implemented PLCs. This suggests that the respondents found it more beneficial to work with colleagues, rather than in isolation. Educational researchers, such as Richard DuFour (2015), state that it is a core principle of successful professional learning communities to have teachers work collaboratively as oppose to working in isolation. This is beneficial information for my study, because DuFour further states that this type of collaboration can lead to improved student learning (DuFour, 2015).

There was a tie for next frequently reported theme. Three respondents, or 30%, perceived Student Achievement, as well as opportunities for Student Data Review, as the greatest benefit or advantage that PLCs offer. After identifying that teachers perceived the benefits of working collaboratively, it was affirming as the school principal to determine that while they meet, they found it beneficial to review the student assessment data collectively. This type of data review can facilitate opportunities to identify common student learning deficiencies and growths, and ultimately can positively shift student

achievement and learning. Tom Hierck and Kenneth Williams (2015) state that when members of PLCs engage in review of student assessment data, the members benefit from the opportunity to identify teaching strengths, as well as evidence of student learning (Hierck & Williams, 2015).

There was also a tie for the next frequently reported theme. Two of the respondents, or 20%, perceived Lesson and Assessment Planning and Time as the greatest benefit or advantage of PLCs offer instructional staff. These were beneficial data for me because one of the key steps in the Seven Stages of PLCs is for teachers to be able to have time dedicated within their PLC to develop common assessments and lesson plans (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015). The responses from teacher interview question #3 are posted in Table 35.

Table 35

Teacher Interview Question 3: As a result from participating in a Professional Learning Community, what do you perceive as some of the greatest benefits or advantages that a PLC offers?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Collaboration	90%	B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J
Lesson/Assess. Planning	20%	A, G
Student Achievement	30%	E, F, H
Student Data Review	30%	B, D, E
Time	20%	A, H

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 3.

In response to interview question #4 (As a result from participating in a Professional Learning Community, what do you think are some of the greatest challenges regarding Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Resistance and Teacher Buy-in to PLCs. Six of the respondents, or 60%, reported that resistant teachers were the greatest challenge. These are relevant data because I was able to determine that additional professional development for instructional staff members

regarding the benefits of PLCs may be needed. The next most frequently reported theme was Time. Four of the respondents, or 40% felt that the lack of time to collaborate during the instructional day was the greatest challenge. These were important data because they inform me that I must ensure that the master school schedule is designed in a manner that provides instructional staff with sufficient time dedicated for collaboration. Richard DuFour (2015) states that if specific time is not identified and protected for PLC work, then instructional staff will not engage in PLCs. The next frequently reported theme was Singleton Courses. Two of the respondents, or 20%, reported that being the only teacher within MSHS to teach a course is the greatest challenge regarding PLCs. These are valuable data for me. Because MSHS is a small school, many of the teachers are scheduled singleton courses. As their administrator, if I am going to have an expectation for them to collaborate, I must identify alternative ways that they can engage in PLCs. There was a two-way tie for the next frequently reported theme. One respondent, or 10%, reported that the assignment of Multi-Level Grades and the establishment of Weak Norms within PLCs were the greatest challenge. Many of the teachers at MSHS are assigned both middle and high school courses, which causes the teachers to be members of more than one PLC.

As the school leader, this is important data to consider when developing teaching assignments. Vertical alignment can be beneficial in the PLC process, however if I assign my teachers in multiple directions, I could damper their consistent involvement within a PLC. Failure to establish appropriate norms within a PLC are important data because this could lead to dysfunction throughout the entire PLC (Weber, 2011). The responses from teacher interview question #4 are posted in Table 36.

Table 36

Teacher Interview Question 4: As a result from participating in a Professional Learning Community, what do you think are some of the greatest challenges regarding Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Multi-Level/Grade	10%	J
Resistance/Buy-in	60%	A, B, D, F, I, J
Singleton Courses	20%	E, G
Time	40%	C, E, G, J
Weak Norms	10%	H

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 4.

In response to interview question #5 (How do you think Professional Learning Communities impact student achievement?), the most frequently reported theme was Teaching Strategies. Nine of the respondents, or 90%, reported that improvements in instructional strategies and practices developed within PLCs impact student achievement. These are important data for me because John Hattie (2015) states that one of the most imperative factors that can facilitate increased student achievement is a skilled teacher (Hattie, 2015). These data were affirming for me as the school principal to learn the instructional staff members perceived growth in their personal skills and abilities to instruct students.

The second most frequently reported theme was Data-Driven Instruction. Three of the respondents, or 30%, felt that being able to identify and track academic progress of students within PLCs had the greatest impact on student achievement. These were important data for me because I was able to infer PLCs are operating at a PLC Stage 5. This is the pivotal stage where PLCs engage in analyzing student data and adjusting future instruction (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015).

The least frequently reported theme was Standards Knowledge. Two of the respondents, or 20%, reported student achievement was impacted due to their ability to

gain a deeper understanding of standards as a result of collaborating within PLCs. Although this is the least frequently reported theme, these data are relevant. When teachers have a deep understanding of their subject matter, they are equipped to positively influence student achievement. Barbara Stern and Marcella Kysilka (2008) state this type of understanding is one of the utmost valued goals of education (Kysilka & Stern, 2008). For a teacher to deliver instruction for understanding, they must first have a clear understanding of the curriculum. The responses from teacher interview question #5 are posted in Table 37.

Table 37

Teacher Interview Question 5: How do you think Professional Learning Communities impact student achievement?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Data-Driven Instruction	30%	A, B, D
Standards Knowledge	20%	B, J
Teaching Strategies	90%	A, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 5.

In response to interview question #6 (What would you change about the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Purposeful PLCs Only. Four of the respondents, or 40%, felt that it was important to the PLCs be meaningful and purposeful. These were substantial data for me because as the school leader, I want to ensure that the PLCs are operating appropriately, and not just having a superficial meeting without accomplishing the true goal of PLCs. There was a two-way tie for the next frequently reported theme. Two of the respondents, or 20%, reported that having a consistent meeting time and teacher accountability within PLCs was needed during the implementation process. These were relevant data because I can infer teachers are willing to engage in PLCs, however they want consistency and

liability for all members. I need to ensure that the master schedule is designed in a manner that facilitates opportunities for consistency of PLC meetings. I also have to ensure that PLCs have established proper procedures and norms, as this would address accountability concerns. There was three-way tie for the least frequently reported theme. One respondent, or 10%, perceived Grade vs Content Focus, Increase PLC Time, and Mandatory PLC Training as the areas of PLC implementation that they would change. These are important data for me because they provide support to coordinate additional professional development with emphasis on the implementation of PLCs., as well as the purpose of PLCs. These data also inform me of the need to make adjustments with the master schedule to identify additional time for PLCs to meet. The responses from teacher interview question #6 are posted in Table 38.

Table 38

Teacher Interview Question 6: What would you change about the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Consistent Meeting Time	20%	A, G
Grade vs Content Focus	10%	C
Increase PLC Time	10%	A
Mandatory PLC Training	10%	D
Purposeful PLCs Only	40%	F, H, I, J
Teacher Accountability	20%	B, E

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 6.

In response to interview question #7 (What do you perceive as the greatest challenge with implementing Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Ideal Meeting Time. Seven of the respondents, or 70%, felt the greatest challenge with PLC implementation is identifying a meeting time that is convenient for all PLC members. With such a large percentage of the respondents at MSHS reporting the theme, these data are important for me in the establishment of

properly functioning PLCs. Tom Many (2009) states that designating specific appropriate time during the instructional day for teachers to collaborate within a PLC is one of the most essential conditions of a properly implemented PLC (Many, 2009). The 4 remaining themes, Monitoring Multiple PLCs, Singleton Class PLC, Teacher Buy-In, and Varied PLC Understanding, each had 1 respondent, or 10%, report them as the greatest challenge with implementing PLCs. Data from these themes are important for me because if I fail to address these areas, they each could foster dysfunction and resistance within PLCs. The responses from teacher interview question #7 are posted in Table 39.

Table 39

Teacher Interview Question 7: What do you perceive as the greatest challenge with implementing Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Ideal Meeting Time	70%	B, C, D, E, F, G, J
Monitoring Multiple PLCs	10%	A
Singleton Class PLC	10%	H
Teacher Buy-In	10%	J
Varied PLC Understanding	10%	I

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 7.

In response to interview question #8 (Were all teachers able to participate equitably within Professional Learning Communities? If not, how might we accomplish this?), the most frequently reported theme was Equitable PLCs Present. Nine of the respondents, or 90%, perceived equitability within PLCs at MSHS. These data allow me to infer that the teachers at MSHS are progressing appropriately within the “Seven Stages of PLCs.” I can also infer that effective collaboration between instructional staff members is occurring. The least frequently reported theme was Partially Equitable PLCs. One instructional staff member, or 10%, reported they only perceived equitability within PLCs on occasion. As a school leader, these data concern me because they imply that

PLC dysfunction may be present at MSHS. Although this is a small percentage, any type of distinction can manifest into resistance against the PLC initiative. The responses from teacher interview question #8 are posted in Table 40.

Table 40

Teacher Interview Question 8: Were all teachers able to participate equitably within Professional Learning Communities? If not, how might we accomplish this?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Equitable PLCs Present	90%	A, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J
Partially Equitable PLCs	10%	B

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 8.

In response to interview question #9 (What do you perceive as the role of administrators within Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was PLC Facilitator. Six of the respondents, or 60%, reported that administrators within PLCs should operate as the facilitator of the group. The next frequently reported theme was Admin PLC Overseers. Four of the respondents, or 40%, reported administrators should be overseers of PLCs to ensure they are operating appropriately. The least frequently reported theme was Guide PLC Leaders. One respondent, or 10%, perceived that administrators within PLC should equip, empower, and guide PLC Leaders. These data for Teacher Interview Question #9 were noteworthy because I was able to infer that the respondents have a clear understanding of the role administrators should partake within PLCs. Effective PLCs require commitment from every entity within a school. Instructional staff will be prone to buy-in to the initiative if they observe involvement and support from their administrator. The responses from teacher interview question #9 are posted in Table 41.

Table 41

Teacher Interview Question 9: What do you perceive as the role of administrators within Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Admin PLC Overseers	40%	A, B, H, I
Guide PLC Leaders	10%	A
PLC Facilitator	60%	C, D, E, F, G, J

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 9.

In response to interview question #10 (How would you describe the level of involvement of administrators within Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Highly Involved Administrator. Six of the respondents, or 60%, perceived their administrators as being highly involved in the PLC process. There was a two-way tie for next frequently reported theme. Two respondents, or 20%, perceived there was good involvement from administrators within PLCs, however there was room for improvement. They also perceived that administrators were involved within PLCs as mentors. These data are pertinent because I can infer there may be different levels of involvement by the administrators at MSHS. As the school principal, I would need to address this, as it is imperative that a clear vision statement regarding PLCs is communicated and consistent administrative actions are observed. The responses from teacher interview question #10 are posted in Table 42.

Table 42

Teacher Interview Question 10: How would you describe the level of involvement of administrators within Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Good/Room for Improvement	20%	E, F
Highly Involved Admin	60%	A, B, C, G, I, J
Mentor for PLCs	20%	D, H

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 10.

In response to interview question #11 (What do you perceive as advantages of creating Individual Professional Development Plans?), the most frequently reported theme was Goal Oriented. Eight of the respondents, or 80%, perceived that having the opportunity to develop and establish a personal instructional goal was an advantage of creating an IPDP. These are beneficial data for me because they allow me to infer that a large percentage of my instructional staff is receptive to self-improvement, growth opportunities, and self-reflection. This also informs me that the instructional staff is receptive to taking ownership in their ability to become equipped to properly instruct students. The next frequently reported theme was Monitoring Tool. Three of the respondents, or 30%, perceived that having the ability to monitor their personal growth and improvement was an advantage of creating an IPDP. These data are relevant because they allow me to infer that a percentage of the staff is receptive to an ongoing self-improvement process. PLCs are an on-going, continuous cycle that involves monitoring. Monitoring of instructional strategies, as well as monitoring of student data. The least frequently reported theme was Teacher Accountability. One respondent, or 10%, perceived that being able to hold teachers accountable for their personal growth and instruction was an advantage in creating an IPDP. These data were important for me because I was able to determine the majority of the respondents did not make connections with accountability during the IPDP process. Successful implementation of PLCs, with supporting IPDPs, requires trust, commitment, and accountability from all of its members. Robert Eaker and Janel Keating (2012), state it is difficult to properly align within an organization if clarity regarding expectations and accountability have not been established (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Instructional staff members within a PLC must

know what they are expected to do within their PLC, and they must be accountable for their role within the PLC. The responses from teacher interview question #11 are posted in Table 43.

Table 43

Teacher Interview Question 11: What do you perceive as advantages of creating Individual Professional Development Plans?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Goal Oriented	80%	A, B, D, F, G, H, I, J
Monitoring Tool	30%	B, C, E
Teacher Accountability	10%	D

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 11.

In response to interview question #12 (What do you perceive as challenges with creating Individual Professional Development Plans?), the most frequently reported theme was Difficult Process. Five of the respondents, or 50%, reported the cluttered platform required to create electronic IPDPs was a difficult challenge. These are noteworthy data because I was able to infer that additional professional development directed towards utilizing district electronic platforms may be needed for my staff. The next frequently reported theme was Time Consuming. Four of the respondents, or 40%, perceived the amount of time required to dedicate to creating an IPDP was a challenge. This is important because instructional staff members are already limited in time availability. If creating an IPDP is perceived as too time consuming, teachers are not as receptive to engaging in the task. The third frequently reported theme was Admit Improvement Needed. Three of the respondents, or 30% perceived the ability to acknowledge that personal professional growth is needed was a challenge when creating an IPDP. These are relevant data because they allow me to identify the importance of ensuring that my instructional staff has a clear understanding of the purpose of IPDPs. It

also informs me of the need to stress one of the key principles of successful PLCs, the importance of establishing trust among all members. When PLC members establish trust, they are not as vulnerable when identifying and discussing areas for personal growth. The least frequently reported theme was Understanding Data. Two of the respondents, or 20%, perceived that not being able to properly understand the data to submit in their IPDP was a challenge. Although only a small percentage of the respondents reported this theme, these data are still important because they infer that student data reporting and analysis professional development are needed. The responses from teacher interview question #12 are posted in Table 44.

Table 44

Teacher Interview Question 12: What do you perceive as challenges with creating Individual Professional Development Plans?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Admit Improvement Needed	30%	A, G, J
Difficult Process	50%	B, C, E, H, I
Time Consuming	40%	D, F, I, J
Understanding Data	20%	A, H

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 12.

In response to interview question #13 (How do you think Individual Professional Development Plans impact student achievement?), the most frequently reported theme was Positive Impact. Eight of the respondents, or 80%, reported IPDPs having a positive impact on student achievement. These are relevant data because they affirm the impact the PLC initiative is having within MSHS. The least frequently reported theme was IPDP Not Needed for Impact. Two of the respondents, or 20%, reported that although student achievement was moving in a positive direction, IPDPs did not have an impact on student achievement. These data were substantial for me because I was able to infer that instructional staff members may be completing IPDPs out of compliance, rather than as a

commitment to impacting personal growth and student achievement. The responses from teacher interview question #13 are posted in Table 45.

Table 45

Teacher Interview Question 13: How do you think Individual Professional Development Plans impact student achievement?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
IPDP Not Needed for Impact	20%	I, J
Positive Impact	80%	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 13.

In response to interview question #14 (What would you change about the development of Individual Professional Development Plans?), the most frequently reported theme was Simplify the Process. Six of the respondents, or 60%, reported that making adjustments to simplify the process of completing an IPDP is a needed change. These data are important because they relate directly to the most frequently reported theme in Teacher Interview Question #12, Difficult Process. Instructional staff would be more receptive to engaging in creating an IPDP if the process was not as challenging. The next frequently reported theme was Timeline for Completion. Four of the respondents, or 40%, reported the timeframe in which IPDPs must be developed is not an ideal time of the school year. Creating and submitting plans within the first few weeks of the school year limits the amount of data instructional staff are able to obtain from students, which limits their ability to properly identify a personal instructional growth goal. The third frequently reported theme was Guidance to Create. Two of the respondents, or 20%, reported receiving guidance from colleagues or administrators in the development of their IPDP was needed. These data allow me to infer that specific professional development targeting IPDP development may be needed at MSHS. One of

the respondents, or 10%, did not have a comment regarding this interview question. The responses from teacher interview question #14 are posted in Table 46.

Table 46

Teacher Interview Question 14: What would you change about the development of Individual Professional Development Plans?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Guidance to Create	20%	A, G
Simplify the Process	60%	B, C, E, H, I, J
Timeline for Completion	40%	A, D, E, I
No Answer/No Comment	10%	F

Note: 9 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 14.

In response to interview question #15 (What do you perceive as the role of administrators in the development of your Individual Professional Development Plan?), the most frequently reported theme was Provide Guidance. Nine of the respondents, or 90%, perceived the MSHS administrators as providing guidance and support for instructional staff in the development of their IPDPs. As the school principal, these data were important because I was able to infer that administrative involvement in the IPDP process was not only a non-negotiable for MSHS administrators, it was also positively perceived and receptive from instructional staff. I can also infer the teacher buy-in to the IPDP process was high. The least frequently reported theme was Communicating Expectations. Four of the respondents, or 40%, reported that the role of MSHS administrators was to clearly state all expectations of IPDPs. These are important data for me because I can infer that the administrators at MSHS need to examine current practices to ensure that a consistent and clear vision of expectations is communicated to all staff members. Based on the responses from the respondents, miscommunication of IPDP expectations may be present at MSHS. Instructional staff members may not engage in the

IPDP process with fidelity if they are unclear of what they are expected to perform. The responses from teacher interview question #15 are posted in Table 47.

Table 47

Teacher Interview Question 15: What do you perceive as the role of administrators in the development of your Individual Professional Development Plan?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Communicating Expectations	40%	A, E, H, I
Provide Guidance	90%	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 15.

In response to interview question #16 (How would you describe the level of consistency by administrators with the implementation of instructional staff members' IPDPs?), the most frequently reported theme was Fully Consistent. Seven of the respondents, or 70%, described the level of consistency among MSHS administrators as fully consistent during the IPDP implementation process. These data were notable because it is imperative that a unified vision be communicated. It is even more important that the actions of the three MSHS administrators be perceived as consistent. If the administrators are not demonstrating steady actions based on the communicated vision and expectations, division and resistance may manifest among the instructional staff members. The least frequently reported theme was Varied Consistency. Three of the respondents, or 30%, reported that there were times when all three of the administrators did not demonstrate consistency with the implementation of IPDPs. The respondents reported that the actions of the principal were consistent, however the actions of the assistant principals were not always consistent. These data were substantial for me as the school principal because I was able to infer that I needed to develop consistency among my administrative team. I need to establish procedures and communication with my assistant principals to ensure that we are all unified in our

message and actions with the instructional staff. The responses from teacher interview question #16 are posted in Table 48.

Table 48

Teacher Interview Question 16: How would you describe the level of consistency by administrators with the implementation of instructional staff members' IPDPs?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Fully Consistent	70%	A, B, C, D, E, G, H
Varied Consistency	30%	F, I, J

Note: 10 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 16.

In response to interview question #17 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?), two themes with identical number of responses were recognized as the most frequently reported theme. Three of the respondents, or 30%, reported there was a need to diversify the PLC approach to ensure it encompasses all of the unique aspects of MSHS, and the PLC training should be available for all instructional and administrative staff members. These data were important because they allow me to infer that the respondents are not only receptive to PLC implementation, but they are also identifying strategies to improve the implementation process. The next frequently reported theme was PLC Strength/Teacher Based. Two of the respondents, or 20%, reported that PLCs at MSHS were as strong as the instructional staff members within the PLC wanted them to be. If the PLC members believed in the purpose of PLCs and were committed to the continuous process of engaging in PLCs as a strategy to address student achievement, then the PLC was strong. However, if teacher buy-in to the PLC process was not present, resistance may weaken the PLC. There was also a tie for the least frequently reported theme. One respondent, or 10%, reported PLCs must be standards-based, and data driven, and that PLCs facilitate high quality educators. These were important data because I could infer the respondents

did perceive positive attributes to the PLC process. One of the respondents did not have any additional comments or information to share regarding PLCs at MSHS. The responses from teacher interview question #17 are posted in Table 49.

Table 49

Teacher Interview Question 17: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Data/Standards-Based	10%	D
Diversify PLC Approach	30%	C, I, J
High Quality Educators	10%	F
PLC Strength/Teacher Based	20%	B, H
PLC Training For All	30%	A, D, E
No Additional Comments	10%	G

Note: 9 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 17.

In response to interview question #18 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme. Two of the respondents, or 20% reported that IPDPs help students and IPDPs should be based on classroom strategies rather than data based. These data were interesting because I was able to determine that MSHS instructional staff members were receptive to the IPDP process, however they also perceived change was needed in the current IPDP process. There was also a tie for the next frequently reported theme. One respondent, or 10%, reported they appreciated that IPDPs were submitted electronically, while one respondent reported that IPDPs were not needed and did not have any impact on student achievement or instructional improvement. These data allowed me to infer that resistance and a lack of instructional buy-in to the IPDP process was present at MSHS. I need to be strategic in addressing the instructional staff members who were not fully convinced of the process. Four of the respondents, or 40%, did not

have any additional information to share with me regarding IPDPs. The responses from teacher interview question #18 are posted in Table 50.

Table 50

Teacher Interview Question 18: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
IDPDs Help Students	20%	D, H
IPDPs Are Digital	10%	E
IPDPs Aren't Needed	10%	I
Strategy vs Data Based	20%	A, J
No Additional Comments	40%	B, C, F, G

Note: 6 of 10 participants responded to Teacher Interview Question 18.

Sited Based Administrator Interview

Two MSHS administrators were invited to participate in the site based administrator interviews. Both site based administrators, or a response rate of 2 out of 2, agreed to complete the interview in a face-to-face audio-recorded process. The range of the interviews was 33 minutes to 45 minutes in length, with the average length of the interviews at 39 minutes. The Site Based Administrator Interview Protocol is listed as Appendix E in the appendices.

In response to site based administrator interview question #1 (What are your perceptions regarding the schoolwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; Scheduled – PLC Priority and Established Meeting Time. Two site based administrators, or 100%, perceived PLC implementation as a priority at MSHS due to the master schedule being arranged to support established designated time during the instructional school day specifically for PLCs. This data is important because it specifically relates to my goal for PLC implementation at MSHS. These data also support data reported by the instructional

staff respondents in that the majority of the respondents desired time during their contractual hours to meet within their assigned PLC. The responses from site based administrator interview question #1 are posted in Table 51.

Table 51

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 1: What are your perceptions regarding the schoolwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Established Meeting Time	100%	A, B
Scheduled – PLC Priority	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 1.

In response to site based administrator interview question #2 (What are some schoolwide challenges you have observed with the implementation of schoolwide Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Singleton Courses. Two of the respondents, or 100%, reported it is challenging to implement schoolwide PLCs when a large percentage of courses at MSHS only have one instructional staff member assigned to teach the course. PLC implementation requires the ability to meet and collaborate with other instructional staff. This becomes a challenge when only one teacher is assigned to a course. The least frequently reported theme was assigned to Multiple PLCs. One respondent, or 50%, reported it becomes a challenge to implement PLCs when instructional staff and administrators are assigned to more than one PLC. These data allow me to infer that I may need to work with my assistant principals to revise our current PLC assignments. The responses from site based administrator interview question #2 are posted in Table 52.

Table 52

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 2: What are some schoolwide challenges you have observed with the implementation of schoolwide Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Assigned to Multiple PLCs	50%	B
Singleton Courses	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 2.

In response to site based administrator interview question #3 (How might the observed challenges of implemented Professional Learning Communities at the school based level be overcome?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; Digital PLCs and Outside PLCs. Two of the respondents, or 100%, reported that observed challenges of PLCs may be addressed if the PLCs were afforded opportunities to incorporate digital platforms, such as Skype, to conduct digital PLCs with instructional staff members throughout MHSD. These were notable data for me as I am currently working with the district's Technology Department to update the digital platforms at MSHS. The responses from site based administrator interview question #3 are posted in Table 53.

Table 53

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 3: How might the observed challenges of implemented Professional Learning Communities at the school based level be overcome?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Digital PLCs	100%	A, B
Outside PLCs	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 3.

In response to site based administrator interview question #4 (What advantages have you observed at the school level with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Scheduled Dedicated Time. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested the greatest advantage observed at MSHS with the implementation of PLCs was the scheduled time built within the instructional school

day for PLCs. These data were important for me because I could infer that the revisions completed to the master schedule and Wednesday bell schedule were perceived as positive changes. The responses from site based administrator interview question #4 are posted in Table 54.

Table 54

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 4: What advantages have you observed at the school level with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Scheduled Dedicated Time	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 4.

In response to site based administrator interview question #5 (What would be some suggestions for implementing Professional Learning Communities so we have consistency within our school?), the most frequently reported theme was Increased Digital PLCs. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested that PLC consistency within MSHS could be achieved if additional digital platforms were available for instructional staff members and administrators. These important data support data reported by instructional staff respondents, in that the respondents also reported enhanced PLCs could be facilitated by additional access to digital PLCs. There was a tie for the next frequently reported theme; Ongoing PLC PD for All and Partnering With Other PLCs. One of the respondents, or 50%, suggested that PLC consistency within MSHS could be achieved if PLC professional development opportunities were continuous and made available for all instructional and administrative staff members. These data are consistent with data reported from the instructional staff interviews. One of the administrative respondents, or 50%, also reported partnering with PLCs in other schools could enhance PLC consistency within MSHS. These data are also consistent with data reported by instructional staff members and were suggested as a

strategy to assist instructors of singleton courses. The responses from site based administrator interview question #5 are posted in Table 55.

Table 55

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 5: What are some suggestions for implementing Professional Learning Communities so we have consistency within our school?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Increased Digital PLCs	100%	A, B
Ongoing PLC PD for All	50%	B
Partnering w/Other PLCs	50%	A

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 5.

In response to site based administrator interview question #6 (How would you describe the level of impact Professional Learning Communities have had on student achievement throughout our school?), the most frequently reported theme was Positive High Impact. Two of the respondents, or 100%, described the level of PLC impact on student achievement at MSHS as highly positive and beneficial. Richard DuFour and Michael Fullan state that “PLCs can play a central role in dramatically improving the overall performance of schools, the engagement of students, and the sense of efficacy and job satisfaction of educators (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 4). These data are important for me as it allows me to infer the PLC implementation process is perceived as meeting the ultimate goal of PLCs, increasing student learning gains. The responses from site based administrator interview question #6 are posted in Table 56.

Table 56

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 6: How would you describe the level of impact Professional Learning Communities have had on student achievement throughout our school?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Positive High Impact	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 6.

In response to site based administrator interview question #7 (What would be some suggestions for teachers in developing Individual Professional Development Plans so we have consistency within our school?), the most frequently reported theme was Open to Growth Learning. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested that instructional staff members needed to be receptive to suggested opportunities for growth. These data allow me to infer that instructional staff resistance to IPDP may be due to their unwillingness to admit they need improvement and growth with instructional practices. The least frequently reported theme was Complete Collaboratively. One respondent, or 50%, suggested that instructional consistency in developing IPDPs could be achieved if teachers were encouraged to complete the process collaboratively rather than in isolation. These data inform me of the need for improved communication regarding the expectations for completing IPDPs. The responses from site based administrator interview question #7 are posted in Table 57.

Table 57

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 7: What are some suggestions for teachers in developing Individual Professional Development Plans so we have consistency within our school?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Complete Collaboratively	50%	B
Open to Growth Learning	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 7.

In response to site based administrator interview question #8 (How would you describe the level of impact instructional Individual Professional Development Plans have had on student achievement throughout our school?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; Compliance Not Commitment and Low Impact Consistency. Two of the respondents, or 100%, described the level of impact IPDPs had on student

achievement as low because a high percentage of the teachers completed the IPDP process out of compliance rather than commitment for personal instructional growth opportunities. These data are consistent with the instructional staff interview data reported. These data allow me to determine that the instructional and administrative staff are lacking a thorough understanding of the purpose and benefits of IPDPs. The responses from site based administrator interview question #8 are posted in Table 58.

Table 58

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 8: How would you describe the level of impact instructional Individual Professional Development Plans have had on student achievement throughout our school?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Compliance Not Commitment	100%	A, B
Low Impact Consistency	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 8.

In response to site based administrator interview question #9 (Is there anything else you want to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?), there was a three-way tie for the most frequently reported theme; Admin Commit to PLCs, Dedicated Time for PLCs, and Strengthened Instruction. Two of the respondents, or 100%, reported administrators at MSHS were committed to PLC implementation. The two respondents also stated a positive response was perceived from the PLC time built within the instructional school day, as well as instructional practices were strengthened at MSHS due to PLC implementation. These data were important because although additional professional development and communication is needed to support the PLC implantation at MSHS, I can infer that PLC process has had a positive impact on the administrators and instructional staff members. The least frequently reported theme was Improved Collaboration. One of the respondents, or 50%, reported that PLC

implementation has served as a strategy to improve instructional collaboration. This important data suggests that the PLC implementation process at MSHS is demonstrating evidence of at least a PLC Stage 2 and beyond because instructional staff members are consistently meeting and collaborating on instructional best practices (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015). The responses from site based administrator interview question #9 are posted in Table 59.

Table 59

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 9: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Admin Commit to PLCs	100%	A, B
Dedicated Time for PLCs	100%	A, B
Improved Collaboration	50%	B
Strengthened Instruction	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 9.

In response to site based administrator interview question #10 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?), there was a two-way tie for the most frequently reported theme; Compliancy Task and Growth Opportunity. Two of the respondents, or 100%, reported the majority of the instructional staff at MSHS completed IPDPs out of compliance demands rather than as a strategy to identify areas for personal growth. These data are consistent with the instructional staff interview data and infers that professional development and communication regarding the benefits of IPDPs may be needed at MSHS. The responses from site based administrator interview question #10 are posted in Table 60.

Table 60

Site Based Administrator Interview Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Compliance Task	100%	A, B
Growth Opportunity	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to Site Based Administrator Interview Question 10.

District Level Administrator Interview

I invited three district level administrators to participate in the district administrator interviews. Two district level administrators, or a response rate of 2 out of 3, agreed to complete the interview in a face-to-face audio-recorded process. Ideally, all three of the invited administrators would have participated in the interview process. The range of the interviews was 55 minutes to 60 minutes in length, with the average length of the interviews at 57.5 minutes. The District Level Administrator Interview Protocol is listed as Appendix D in the appendices.

In response to district level administrator interview question #1 (What are your perceptions regarding the districtwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; PLC PD Emphasis and Staggered Implementation. Two of the respondents, or 100%, perceived the districtwide PLC implementation process was launched in a staggered manner that allowed administrative and instructional staff the opportunity to acclimate to the initiative and the initiative provided adequate professional development to support the participants. These data allowed me to identify inconsistencies between the district level respondents and the instructional respondents. While the district level respondents perceived appropriate professional development was available, instructional staff members perceived that the available training was not accessible for all instructional staff. The

least frequently reported theme was Supported PLCs. One respondent, or 50%, reported that the PLC implementation process provided adequate support for administrative and instructional staff members. This relevant data was consistent with data reported by instructional staff respondents, who felt they received sufficient PLC support from the administrators within MSHS. The responses from district level administrator interview question #1 are posted in Table 61.

Table 61

District Level Administrator Interview Question 1: What are your perceptions regarding the districtwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
PLC PD Emphasis	100%	A, B
Staggered Implementation	100%	A, B
Supported PLCs	50%	A

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 1.

In response to district level administrator interview question #2 (At the district level, what are some of the challenges you have observed with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Time. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested the greatest challenge with implementing PLCs districtwide was identifying adequate time during instructional contractual hours to engage in PLCs. These data were relevant because I was able to infer that appropriate time was a districtwide systemic challenge and not just isolated to MSHS. The least frequently reported theme was Inconsistent Implementation. One of the respondents, or 50%, reported the greatest challenge of PLC implementation resonated around the observed inconsistencies with the implementation process throughout the district. Again, these data were substantial because they allowed me to infer that the challenges observed at MSHS were districtwide systemic challenges and not

challenges isolated at MSHS. The responses from district level administrator interview question #2 are posted in Table 62.

Table 62

District Level Administrator Interview Question 2: At the district level, what are some of the challenges you have observed with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Inconsistent Implementation	50%	B
Time	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 2.

In response to district level administrator interview question #3 (At the district level, how are these observed challenges of implemented Professional Learning Communities overcome?), the most frequently reported theme was Common Language/Planning. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested the challenges of PLC implementation could be addressed if a consistent and common PLC language was incorporated along with an initiative to implement common planning periods for instructional staff based on their teaching assignment or grade level. These data are important because they allow me to affirm the importance of ensuring the MSHS master schedule considers common and grade level planning periods during the early development stages. It also informs me of the need to remain consistent in my communications regarding PLC implementation, as well as reinforce the need for PLC language consistency among my administrative team and instructional staff. The next frequently reported theme was Alternate Bell Schedules. One of the respondents, or 50%, reported that providing an alternate bell schedule during the instructional day could address the challenge of PLC implementation. These data are consistent with the MSHS administrative and instructional staff interview data: both category of respondents

frequently reported the need for dedicated time during the instructional day specifically for meeting within PLCs. These data also affirm my continuation of maintaining an alternate Wednesday bell schedule. The responses from district level administrator interview question #3 are posted in Table 63.

Table 63

District Level Administrator Interview Question 3: At the district level, how might these observed challenges of implemented Professional Learning Communities be overcome?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Alternate Bell Schedules	50%	A
Common Language/Planning	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 3.

In response to district level administrator interview question #4 (What advantages or benefits have you observed at the district level with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Increased Collaboration. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested an advantage or benefit observed at the district level with the implementation of PLCs was increased administrative and instructional staff member collaboration. These data were substantial because they are consistent with both the site based administrator interview data and the instructional staff interview data. There was a tie for the next frequently reported theme; Improved Curriculum Knowledge and Improved Instruction. One of the respondents, or 50%, reported that PLC implantation has facilitated advantageous and beneficial curriculum-based knowledge for instructional staff, as well as positively enhanced instruction. These data allow me to infer that MHSD is operating at a PLC stage of at least Stage 2 or higher because the instructional staff are collaborating to discuss best practices and instructional strategies to impact student achievement (Graham & Ferriter,

2008; DuFour, 2015). The responses from district level administrator interview question #4 are posted in Table 64.

Table 64

District Level Administrator Interview Question 4: What advantages or benefits have you observed at the district level with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Improved Curriculum Knowledge	50%	A
Improved Instruction	50%	B
Increased Collaboration	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 4.

In response to district level administrator interview question #5 (What are your suggestions for implementing Professional Learning Communities so we have consistency within individual schools in our district?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; Commit Not Compliance and The Why Behind PLCs. Two of the respondents, or 100%, suggested a large percentage of instructional staff members did not fully understand the reasons why the implementation of PLCs was needed throughout MHSD. The lack of understanding has led to instructional staff members engaging in PLCs as a compliant task, rather than as a commitment to improving student achievement. These data are consistent with 100% of the site based administrator interview data. I can infer that additional communication regarding the purpose for implementing PLCs is needed at MSHS, and possibly throughout MHSD. The least frequently reported theme is Remove Assumptions. One respondent, or 50%, suggested that removing the assumptions regarding PLCs could facilitate consistency with the implementation process. These important data relate back to the need for me to properly communicate the reasons why PLCs are beneficial at MSHS. If the assumptions are not addressed, a consistent message regarding the reasons why we are engaging in PLCs will

not be achieved. The responses from district level administrator interview question #5 are posted in Table 65.

Table 65

District Level Administrator Interview Question 5: What are your suggestions for implementing Professional Learning Communities so we have consistency within individual schools in our district?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Commit Not Compliance	100%	A, B
Remove Assumptions	50%	B
The Why Behind PLCs	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 5.

In response to district level administrator interview question #6 (How would you describe the level of impact Professional Learning Communities have had on student achievement throughout our district?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; Increased Graduation Rate and Increased Student Data. Two of the respondents, or 100%, described the impact of PLCs on student achievement throughout MHSD as positive. Each year since the school district has engaged in the PLC initiative, the district's graduation rate as increased and student assessment data has increased (Appendices K: Middle Senior High School Student Assessment Data, L: Middle Senior High School Advanced Placement Student Data). These data allow me to infer that PLCs should have a positive impact on the graduation rate and student assessment data at MSHS. The responses from district level administrator interview question #6 are posted in Table 66.

Table 66

District Level Administrator Interview Question 6: How would you describe the level of impact Professional Learning Communities have had on student achievement throughout our district?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Increased Graduation Rate	100%	A, B
Increased Student Data	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 6.

In response to district level administrator interview question #7 (What are your suggestions for teachers in developing Individual Professional Development Plans so we have consistency within individual schools in our district?), there was a tie for the most frequently reported theme; Collaborative/Common Goal and Individualized Goal. One of the respondents, or 50%, suggested by having instructional staff engage in the IPDP process in collaboration with colleagues it would allow them to develop a common goal to collectively work towards within their respective PLCs. Another respondent, or 50%, suggested it was important for instructional staff to have individualized goals to ensure IPDP consistency. These data infer that the instructional staff at MSHS could benefit from the collaborative process of establishing their IPDP goal, however these data leave me with questions regarding how consistency would be achieved if each teacher had a unique and individualized goal. The responses from district level administrator interview question #7 are posted in Table 67.

Table 67

District Level Administrator Interview Question 7: What are your suggestions for teachers in developing Individual Professional Development Plans so we have consistency within individual schools in our district?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Collaborative/Common Goal	50%	A
Individualized Goal	50%	B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 7.

In response to district level administrator interview question #8 (How would you describe the level of impact instructional Individual Professional Development Plans have had on student achievement throughout our district?), the most frequently reported theme was More Targeted Instruction. Two of the respondents, or 100%, described the impact of IPDPs on student achievement as beneficial as they improved the depth of

knowledge of the manner instructional staff members delivered instruction. These data were interesting because they were consistent with data reported by the majority of the instructional staff interview respondents. I can infer that although opportunities for improvement are present in regard to the IPDP process, all of the respondents reported positive attributes to the process that benefit student achievement. The responses from district level administrator interview question #8 are posted in Table 68.

Table 68

District Level Administrator Interview Question 8: How would you describe the level of impact instructional Individual Professional Development Plans have had on student achievement throughout our district?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
More Targeted Instruction	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 8.

In response to district level administrator interview question #9 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?), the most frequently reported theme was Understanding the Why. Two of the respondents, or 100%, stated it is imperative for administrative and instructional staff to fully understand the reasons why PLC implementation is needed within MHSD. These data allow me to determine that I must continue to incorporate the purpose for the PLC initiative with my staff. If the teachers lose sight of the purpose of the initiative, opportunities for resistance may manifest. The responses from district level administrator interview question #9 are posted in Table 69.

Table 69

District Level Administrator Interview Question 9: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
Understanding the Why	100%	A, B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 9.

In response to district level administrator interview question #10 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?), there was a two-way tie for the most frequently reported theme; One Unified Force and Personal Goal. One of the respondents, or 50%, suggested that the IPDP process could be strengthened if instructional staff members engaged in the process collaboratively as one unified team, rather than in isolation. Another respondent, or 50%, suggested that the IPDP process would be strengthened if each teacher understood the importance of establishing a personal instructional growth goal. These data allow me to infer that there may be inconsistencies among district level administrators regarding the implementation of IPDPs. The responses from district level administrator interview question #10 are posted in Table 70.

Table 70

District Level Administrator Interview Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?

Themes	Responses	Respondent
One Unified Force	50%	A
Personal Goal	50%	B

Note: 2 of 2 participants responded to District Level Administrator Interview Question 10

PLC Observations

I completed a total of 2 PLC observations at MSHS, which encompassed 1 math PLC observation and 1 language arts PLC observation. The range of the observations was 60 minutes to 71 minutes, with the average length of the observation at 66 minutes. The rubric utilized to complete the PLC observations was adapted from *Learning By Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities At Work* by Rebecca DuFour, Richard DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Thomas Many (DuFour et al., 2010). I listed the PLC continuum categories of the rubric as Pre-Initiating, Initiating, Implementing,

Developing, and Sustaining to assess the alignment of the observed PLCs with Richard and Rebecca DuFour's "Seven Stages of PLCs" from their company, Solutions Tree. The Pre-Initiating rubric item represents a PLC that has not begun the practice of PLCs. The Initiating rubric item represents PLCs who have begun efforts implement PLCs, however the implementation process is not apparent with all members of the PLC. The Implementing rubric item represents the stage where PLC implementation has occurred, however it can be inferred that the PLC members are participating out of compliance rather than commitment. The Developing rubric item represents PLCs with incorporated structures to support the shift of working effectively within a PLC. The Sustaining rubric item represents a PLC with deeply rooted commitment to working collaboratively through the "Seven Stages of PLCs" (DuFour et al., 2010). (The Professional Learning Communities Observation Rubric is shown in Appendix H.)

I observed a total of 8 MSHS instructional staff members during the math PLC and a total of 10 MSHS instructional staff members during the language arts PLC. All participants signed the informed consent to allow me to observe their respective PLC (Appendix C).

In response to PLC rubric indicator #1 (The PLC includes all members of the grade level/content area), the observed indicator with the math PLC was Developing. The observed indicator with the language arts PLC was Sustaining. These data allow me to infer that the majority of the instructional staff within the observed contented areas are engaging in the PLC process. They also allow me to determine that I need to address the staff within the math PLC who are not actively engaging in the schoolwide initiative.

In response to PLC rubric indicator #2 (The PLC Norms are established and evident), the observed indicator with the math and language arts PLCs was Sustaining. These data are consistent with the current PLC Stage that these two content areas are identified as achieving. These data also affirm that they are both beyond the initial Stage 1 (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015).

In response to PLC rubric indicator #3 (All members of the PLC are characterized by mutual respect, support, and valued contribution to the PLC), the observed indicator with the math PLC was Developing. The observed indicator for the language arts PLC was Sustaining. These data allow me to infer the two content area PLCs observed are positively engaging in the process. These data also allow me to infer that if negativity and resistance are present within the content area PLCs, it is at a minimum.

In response to PLC rubric indicator #4 (The PLC members demonstrate evidence of collaborative lesson planning), the observed indicator with the math and language arts PLC was Sustaining. These data are important because they allow me to infer that both of the content area PLCs observed are operating at a PLC Stage 4 or higher. Stage 4 is one of the most critical stages in achieving a successful PLC (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015).

In response to PLC rubric indicator #5 (The PLC members demonstrate evidence of sharing of instructional practices and ideas to promote increased student achievement), the observed indicator with both the math and language arts PLCs was Sustaining. These data suggest that instructional staff members within the observed PLCs understand the purpose of PLCs. The PLC members comprehend how student learning can be positively impacted through the PLC process.

In response to PLC rubric indicator #6 (The PLC members demonstrate evidence of common formative assessments), the observed indicator for the math and language arts PLCs was Sustaining. These data allow me to infer the observed content area PLCs are operating at a PLC Stage 5 or higher. This important stage in the PLC process is where student achievement data are analyzed and instructional practices modified or adjusted based on the results of the student assessment data (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015).

In response to PLC rubric indicator #7 (The PLC members demonstrate evidence of analyzing student formative assessment data), the observed indicator for both the math and language arts PLC was Sustaining. Data from this rubric indicator are consistent with data from rubric indicator #6. These data also allow me to infer that the PLCs observed are operating at a PLC stage of 5 or higher. The primary focus is on analyzing student data to identify the specific learning needs of each individual student (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015).

In response to PLC rubric indicator #8 (The PLC members demonstrate evidence of incorporating components of their IPDP while analyzing student formative assessment data), the observed indicator for the math and language arts PLCs was Developing. Although the rubric item suggests the observed PLCs were working effectively within their PLC, these data allow me to infer that additional professional development may be needed for instructional staff members on how to collectively work towards establishing individual instructional growth goals. These data are also consistent with data observed from the district level administrative interviews.

In response to PLC rubric indicators #9 (The PLC members demonstrate effective conflict resolution strategies while collaborating within their PLC), the observed indicator for both the math and language arts PLCs was Sustaining. These data allow me to infer that the observed PLCs are effectively engaging in the PLC implementation process. I was also able to identify potential instructional leaders that may assist other PLCs within MSHS with the PLC implementation process.

Organizational Changes Suggested by the Data

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model has become a common strategy for school districts throughout the United States to achieve instructional collaboration towards improved student achievement. PLCs are not a trend or the latest fad, as they have been in existence in schools and businesses since at least 1993. Defined as an “ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, pg. 11), PLCs are a systematic collective approach towards achieving increased student academic success.

Since their formal conception more than three decades ago, research has shown that teacher collaboration that includes an ongoing cycle of common lesson planning, analyzing student data, and differentiated instructional practices in the form of PLCs has contributed to increases in student learning. Student achievement gains are attributed to the sharing of goals among the instructional staff. This goal sharing facilitates improved instructional staff learning, as well as a greater commitment from each member of the PLC. Although substantial data validates the benefits of the PLCs, the implementation of PLCs continues to be resisted by a percentage of instructional staff.

Using Wagner et. al. (2006) *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide for Transforming Our Schools*, I developed a plan that considered organizational changes to improve the implementation of PLCs (the “AS IS” Appendix M) at Middle Senior High School. Wagner values organizational change and places achieving improvements in teaching and learning as the foundational purpose for engaging in a change plan (Wagner et al., 2006). The four organizational areas I examined for possibilities of change and renewal that positively impact education are context, culture, conditions, and competencies.

In 2013, Middle High School District (MHSD) faced recurring years of declining state assessment scores in language arts and algebra. State assessment data for MHSD reflected a continuous downward trend in the percentage of learning gains earned by students districtwide. The language arts learning gains declined from 55% earned during the 2013-2014 school year to 50% by the 2015-2016 school year. I observed a similar decline in the math assessment data, primarily with Algebra 1. The math learning gains declined from 52% earned during the 2013-2014 school year to 40% by the 2015-2016 school year (Florida Standards Assessment). The problem of declining student performance on state assessments led MHSD to initiate a districtwide professional development initiative known as Professional Learning Communities. The purpose of the new initiative was to incorporate a collaborative instructional approach towards addressing the 5% - 18% declining state assessment scores, and to identify best practice strategies for improved student achievement. The goal of the approach was to guarantee the mission of the school district was accomplished by ensuring that all students achieved their highest educational potential.

Research by prominent leaders such as Richard DuFour (DuFour et al., 2010) describes a positive impact on student achievement gains when instructional staff work collaboratively to plan lessons, create common assessments, and problem-solve best instructional practices. Although data and reviewed research studies confirm the benefits of PLC's, a percentage of the instructional staff and administrators within MSHS continue to resist the PLC implementation process. By resisting PLC implementation, student achievement gains are hindered. The problem that calls for change is the resistance of instructional staff and administrators to the implementation of PLCs that ultimately impedes the progress of increased student learning. If the essential learning process that stems from incorporated PLCs is delayed, MSHS will be unable to address the declining student performance in Language Arts and Algebra 1 through PLCs.

I envision the consequences of successfully initiating the changes to fixed mindsets of staff members, isolated instructional planning, and intentional resistance of PLC implementation at MSHS as having a positive impact on student achievement. Richard DuFour and Michael Fullan (2013) state that collaborative working environments with a culture of shared mindset will achieve greater uniformity and sustained focus on improvement with increased results (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). By initiating the positive changes, I envision increased Language Arts learning gains. I also predict a similar increase in the math assessment data at MSHS, specifically with Algebra 1. Finally, I envision a schoolwide culture engrossed within the implementation of PLCs with fidelity and overall increases in student achievement at MSHS.

Middle High School District made the decision to implement districtwide PLCs in an attempt to address declining student learning gains on state assessments in the fall of

2013. Research and data positively supports the benefits of a culture of collaboration on increased student achievement. Tom Hierck and Kenneth Williams (2015) state PLCs are responsible for providing students with the necessary support and interventions needed to ensure every student makes academic gains (Hierck & Williams, 2015). When instructional staff and administrators resist the PLC process, they negatively affect the possibility of improved learning for all students. This is one of the reasons I selected the resistance of PLC implementation as the focus of my change plan. School districts and schools throughout the United States are seeking to overcome the resistance of PLC implementation to achieve the collaborative benefits and increased student achievement.

My primary reason for selecting the resistance of PLC implementation is that the failure to properly implement PLCs could deter improved student achievement.

Countless studies and research by PLC researchers, such as Dr. Richard DuFour, have shown PLCs can have positive and impactful effects on instructional staff skills and knowledge, as well as on student learning (DuFour, 2015). Instructional staff will ultimately achieve their goals of increased student achievement if the PLC is free from resistance, implemented by all key stakeholders with fidelity over a period of time, and is focused on key concepts, content, and instructional standards.

As the newly appointed Principal of Middle Senior High School (MSHS), I have a professional responsibility to ensure that PLCs are implemented within all core and fine art areas of the school: not just because this is a districtwide initiative, but also because increased student achievement is my ultimate goal. Beyond this mandated initiative, I have a belief that just as students learn best in small, collaborative settings, instructional staff develop and improve while collaborating with colleagues. When instructional staff

improves their strategies to meet the needs of all students, effective instructional practice is achieved. Furthermore, when the instructional practice is adjusted based on the needs of the students, increased student achievement is the typical result. Resistance to this process interferes with progression towards increased student learning. Identifying hindrances to the learning process and taking action to eliminate them is one of my primary objectives.

In developing my “AS-IS,” I applied the adaptive leadership framework to develop my change plan for the PLCs within MSHS. Resisting PLC implementation is an adaptive challenge that requires instructional staff and administrators to alter their mindsets and beliefs regarding the importance of PLCs. Alexander Grashow, Ronald Heifetz, and Marty Linsky (2009) affirm that adaptive challenges can only be addressed with a shifting in the mindsets, prioritized practices, and allegiances of individuals within an organization (Grashow, Heifetz, & Linsky, 2009). In the development of my “AS-IS” chart, I applied Wagner et al. (2006) 4 C’s arenas of change in my examination of MSHS’s PLC practices (Appendix M: AS IS 4 C’s Analysis).

The 4 C’s arenas of change encompass a systematic approach to observe both the challenges and potentials of implemented change. This systematic approach provides a leader with the opportunity to identify both the potential hindrances and benefits of implemented change. By examining competencies, the leader is provided with the opportunity to identify specific skills and knowledge of individuals that will undergo implemented change. The leader is also afforded the opportunity to identify how these skills and knowledge affects overall student learning. Leaders gain insight to the external factors that benefit or impede student learning through the examination of the conditions.

The third arena, culture, provides leaders with the opportunity to examine the relationships, assumptions, core values and beliefs of the individuals within the school or organization where change is considered. Finally, the context allows the leader to determine the level of college and career readiness skills students have acquired to achieve overall success. By examining the four targeted arenas of competencies, conditions, culture, and context, a leader is provided with the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the components of the change process (Wagner et al., 2006).

Context

By examining the context, a leader contemplating change implementation is given the opportunity to gain insight in the overall global demands and desires of student learning. The exploration of context provides a leader with a greater understanding of the overall social, economic, and historical components of an organization or school setting. This all-inclusive approach can ultimately provide awareness into the specific factors and origins that both impede or enhance implemented change. As an instructional leader desiring improved student learning, it is essential to not only understand the context, but also understand all factors that affect the context.

The context related to my study involves an overall examination of the implementation of PLC. Middle High School District (MHSD) has implemented a districtwide initiative of PLCs and has placed a focus on effective implementation. Currently, students at MSHS have a high failure rate on Advanced Placement exams, with only 48% of the students achieving level 3 or higher. There is also a large achievement gap between subgroups of students, such as English Language Learners

(ELL) and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) at MSHS. Examining these areas of context will provide me a greater understanding of factors impeding student performance.

Culture

By examining the culture, a leader faced with change implementation is provided with the opportunity to examine one of the most impactful components of change.

Gaining an understanding of the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors of instructional staff and administrators is a critical component to identify factors that could potentially deter the progress of student learning. This area provides an opportunity to gain deeper insight into the mindset of key stakeholders. This factor can impact how change is implemented, because changing of the mindset comes from within individuals.

Successfully examining the culture can provide a leader with a powerful understanding of the beliefs of instructional staff and administrators within a school or organization. To accomplish this task, the leader must first gain a deeper understanding of mindsets.

Webster's Dictionary defines mindset as, "a habitual or characteristic mental attitude that determines how you will interpret and respond to situations" (Webster Online Dictionary). Motivation researcher Carol Dweck (2006) describes mindsets in two different fashions, fixed mindset and growth mindset. She describes individuals with fixed mindsets as possessing the desire to be proven or accomplished, while growth mindsets are receptive to acquiring new attributes and talents (Dweck, 2006).

The examination of culture entails one of the most beneficial aspects related to my change project, the mindsets of key stakeholders. A percentage of instructional staff and administrators of MSHS have fixed mindsets regarding change. The students of MSHS are already performing at high achievement levels on high stakes state

assessments, so some of the instructional staff do not perceive it as a priority to change instructional practices or collaborate within a PLC. There is also a perception that lesson planning in isolation is appropriate and collaborative lesson planning is not necessary. Also, it is a perception that the teachers of MSHS prefer to engage in direct teacher instruction, over shifting to collaborative student led lessons. Finally, instructional staff perceive themselves as teacher experts who are not in need of change because they are successful in producing student learning gains.

Conditions

By examining the conditions, the leader is provided with specific insight into the external factors affecting student learning. Conditions entail the size of a school campus or available facility. Conditions also involve specific factors such as teacher to student ratios, and the time that teachers have instructing students without interferences. Resources that are available to instructional staff are also important conditions that can provide insight to a leader proposing change. Finally, the expectations that are imposed on instructional staff, such as high student performance of state assessments, can also be examined through the arena of conditions. Conditions provides a leader with the opportunity to identify the organization and apportionment of instructional time, available facility, and financial resources within a school or organization when proposing an area of change (Wagner et al., 2006).

The conditions related to my study stem from the master scheduling process of content area courses. There are several singleton courses at MSHS, where there is only one instructional staff member assigned to teach the course. Also, instructional staff members at MSHS are assigned multiple teaching assignments that require the staff to

participate in multiple PLCs. Instructional staff assigned to multiple PLCs have insufficient time to attend the multiple PLCs. There are also insufficient numbers of instructional staff members at MSHS that are willing to serve as PLC leaders. Due to retirements and resignations, new instructional staff members are hired each school year, resulting in inexperienced teachers. Finally, administrators at MSHS have insufficient time to attend all of the different PLCs.

Competencies

By examining competencies within a school or organization, a leader is provided with an opportunity to identify how the acquired skills and knowledge of instructional staff and administrators influence overall student learning. Competencies involves exploring how in depth instructional staff and administrators have involved themselves in opportunities for available on-going professional development. Continuous improvement of instructional practices, skills, and knowledge are beneficial in increasing student learning. Competencies allow leaders contemplating change implementation the opportunity to examine the needs and benefits of incorporated professional development that affects or impedes student learning.

The competencies related to my study surround the knowledge and skills of instructional staff members and administrators' knowledge and skills of facilitating meetings professional learning community meetings. Instructional staff members at MSHS are well versed and knowledgeable regarding how to conduct a monthly content area department meeting, however they have limited skills regarding how to facilitate a collaborative PLC. Not having the knowledge or skills to properly facilitate a PLC can ultimately impede the progress of implemented change. Administrators at MSHS also

have limited knowledge of how to guide and instructionally coach teachers within a PLC. This lack of skills can also cause a major impact on implement change.

Effective instructional collaboration is one of the key benefits of successfully implemented PLCs. The benefits of shared instructional practices facilitate gains in student achievement. Because of the importance of instructional collaboration, identifying the perceptions of resistance to PLCs are important factors in my change leadership plan. Research by prominent leaders such as Richard DuFour (DuFour et al., 2010) describe the beneficial student achievement gains when instructional staff work collaboratively to plan lessons, create common assessments, and problem-solve best instructional practices. Essentially, when PLCs are implemented without resistance, instructional staff and students receive beneficial gains.

By addressing the resistance of PLC implementation, the next steps of my change plan will positively impact the district's educational environment. Free from obstacles and interferences, PLCs have the potential to impact learning and instructional practice in a school, and within an entire district. To fully implement PLCs, they have to become the culture of the school. To successfully achieve districtwide implementation of PLCs, they have to become a systemic and integral cultural extension of the operational component within the school district. "Changing culture in systemic ways is at the heart of any successful large-scale education reform" (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, pg. 4). Incorporating PLCs without resistance from instructional staff and administrators within a school or district, with an embedded collaborative culture, will drastically improve instructional practice and overall performance of school districts. This type of environment will

facilitate learning gains in content areas, such as language arts and math, and can result in improved state assessment performance for students.

During my proposed change plan, I would incorporate collaboration with faculty and community members in collecting and analyzing information pertinent to the resistance of PLC implementation. Effective communication and partnership with key stakeholders within the community is essential during the process of developing a collaborative culture. Reeves (2009) confirms this by stating that the lack of stakeholder support typically results in the stakeholders not developing a belief in the proposed change, and that the change will be temporary (Reeves, 2009). To foster a collaborative environment, I would utilize monthly School Advisory Council meetings as a platform to analyze information pertinent to the effects of resistance of PLCs within MSHS. This would provide me with opportunities to increase the shared knowledge of the benefits of the collaborative approach, as well as the deterrents resistance can have on student assessment data. I would also incorporate instructional focus groups with teachers from each academic and art area as a method to encourage and foster collaboration. The focus groups provide the opportunity to monitor the cohesiveness and functioning of the collaborative approach with direct accounts and testimonials from instructional staff members. I would incorporate climate surveys to provide instructional staff with the opportunity to express their observations of the collaborative process both openly or anonymously. The survey process would provide me with additional collaboration monitoring opportunities to gauge the implemented process. James Mcleskey and Nancy Waldron (2010) state that methods, such as establishing a community and staff collaborative approach, can positively manage the external demands for student

achievement accountability. They further affirm that beneficial gains are facilitated through the bridging of community expectations and the specific goals of the school (Mcleskey & Waldron, 2010).

Interpretation

The results from my surveys, interviews, and observations gave me an understanding of the effects of implemented Professional Learning Communities within MSHS. The results provided confirm that PLCs were operational in the majority of the academic and art areas within MSHS, as I obtained data from all the academic and art area departments. I observed that PLCs were evident in each of the content areas throughout MSHS. I discovered that the PLCs were at different stages of PLC implementation. I was also able to confirm that administrative support and participation was present within the PLCs at MSHS. The results of these data revealed there was a disconnect between Individual Professional Development Plans and student achievement. The development and utilization of effective IPDPs is an area MSHS has challenges to overcome. The results of these data regarding IPDPs allowed me to determine that instructional and administrative staff at MSHS need additional professional development skills and strategies on how to effectively develop, incorporate, and monitor IPDPs. The instructional and administrative respondents viewed IPDPs as a compliance task with unclear connections to impacting student learning, rather than being a meaningful instructional practice component. Finally, the results of these data allowed me to determine the majority of the instructional and administrative staff at MSHS were not resistant to engaging in PLCs as a strategy to address declining student achievement. If

appropriate time to engage in the process was allotted, I was able to determine that the respondents were receptive to engaging in the districtwide initiative.

The significance of the study results centered around the need and desire for uninterrupted time for Professional Learning Communities. I was able to determine that resistance would be minimized if instructional staff were provided with dedicated time for engaging in PLCs. Data revealed that the majority of the staff would engage in the initiative if time was identified. Structuring time within the school day is an area that school leaders have some ability to influence and, in some regards, incorporate change.

As an administrator, I have influence on how the instructional school day is scheduled. I have the ability to place conscious effort in ensuring that the master schedule is developed with incorporated consistent timeframes dedicated to collaborative PLCs. The majority of the instructional staff perceived collaboration within PLCs as beneficial. If I provided them with the needed time to collaborate, positive impacts on both their instructional practices and student achievement could be achieved.

The results allowed me to determine positive impact of PLCs were reported. Although benefits were identified, the majority of the instructional and administrative respondents felt that ongoing PLC training was needed at MSHS. Middle High School District currently provides ongoing professional development to support districtwide PLC implementation. Unfortunately, budgetary constraints limits access to the training for all instructional and administrative staff members. The fact that this training is not readily accessible for all instructional and administrative staff members can be problematic for continual and sustainable success with the PLC implementation process. Successful schoolwide PLC implementation requires participation from everyone within a school

site. Middle High School District may need to allocate additional funding to ensure that training is made available to all staff within MSHS.

These data resulted in this manner because I was able to collect voluntary survey, interview, and observation data of instructional and administrative staff members who genuinely had an interest in providing unbiased responses to the posed questions. The majority of the respondents provided thorough information regarding their specific perspective on PLCs and IPDPs. As educators, the respondents' participation demonstrated support for continual growth, learning, and enhancement to an initiative known to positively impact student learning. Another explanation for the reason why the results of these data transpired this way is because I was able to create a survey and interview environment where the respondents felt comfortable to share honest feedback and perspectives. As the principal of MSHS, it was important for me to establish an understanding that participation was on a voluntary basis and that the identity of all participants would be protected.

Judgments

The goal of my program evaluation was to identify and report on the implementation of the PLC program within MSHS, as well as the extent of fidelity PLCs are operating within MSHS in relation to the Seven Stages of PLCs (Graham & Ferriter, 2008; DuFour, 2015). I also had a goal to determine if PLC implementation facilitated a positive impact on student achievement. Finally, it was also my intention to determine if student achievement increased based on instructional staff members successfully achieving their documented IPDP/IPGP goal as established within their PLC. The following conclusions were discovered regarding my primary research questions:

1. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school perceive as working well in the implemented Professional Learning Communities?

According to my obtained data, the participants perceived that collaborating with colleagues was working well in the implemented PLCs. Instructional strategies at MSHS are improving in response to the collaborative relationships within PLCs. Engaging in collaborative common planning and assessment building is the norm for the majority of the participants. Instructional staff members are gaining a deeper appreciation for working within a team rather than working in isolation. Because of the strengthened instructional practice, the participants anticipate ongoing student achievement growth on state assessments.

2. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school perceive as not working well in the implemented Professional Learning Communities?

According to my collected data, the participants perceived that accountability from all colleagues was not working well in the implemented PLCs. A unified consensus and commitment to engaging in PLCs has not been established at MSHS. Although an established belief in the benefits of PLCs has been established, accountability of all learning community members is yet to be achieved. This breach of accountability facilitates a disconnect among PLCs members and stagnates some of the forward progression of the PLCS Stages.

3. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school perceive as the greatest challenges in the implemented Professional Learning Communities?

According to my data, the participants perceived that insufficient time and resistance to the shift towards PLCs by colleagues were the biggest challenges in the implemented PLCs. The beneficial gains of implemented PLCs have failed to overcome the undertones of resistance among some of the instructional staff members of MSHS. Undetected fixed mindsets have enabled negativity among a percentage of instructional staff members. The challenges of shifting a fixed mindset that is not receptive to collaborative instructional practice is borderline impossible, although the benefits of PLC implementation are impactful on improved student achievement.

4. What do the participants (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) at one middle-high school suggest as methods to improve the implemented Professional Learning Communities?

According to my obtained data, the participants suggested identifying protected time as a method to improve the implemented PLCs. The day-to-day demands placed on instructional staff members can stretch well beyond a contractual work day. Lack of available time to dedicate to collaborative practice may be misdiagnosed as resistance to the initiative. The participants suggested having dedicated time, separate from their lunch period and planning period, as a key strategy to improve implemented PLCs within MSHS.

My secondary exploratory questions to support my primary inquiry are:

1. Is there any relationship between a Professional Learning Community that is meeting the expected goals for implementation, and any changes in student achievement within one middle-high school?

The respondents perceived there was relationship between a PLC that was meeting the expected goals for implementation and perceived changes in student achievement. Reported changes by the respondents included successful planning and development of student common assessments, data analysis of student achievement on formative assessments, and the ability to implement necessary instructional adaptations based on the students' progress and specific needs.

2. According to staff perception within one middle-high school, to what extent do they perceive they have built a Professional Learning Community within the school?

All instructional respondents perceived they have built a PLC within MSHS. Although they perceived it to be at various stages depending on their content area, 100% of the respondents perceived attending an established PLC. The survey and interview data allowed me to determine that PLC implementation has occurred schoolwide at MSHS.

3. What is the role of the school administrators within one middle-high school regarding collaboration within Professional Learning Communities?

According to the instructional staff interview data, the majority of the respondents perceived the role of school administrators regarding collaboration within PLCs was to provide a clear vision, mission, and goal. The respondents also shared that they felt comfort in engaging in the PLC process because of the level of support and presence by

MSHS administrators. The administrator interview data also revealed a shared belief that administrators should support PLC initiatives with clear goals, direction, and expectation. Having a consistent message regarding the expectations and purpose of PLCs can help to support the collaborative process.

After addressing my initial inquiries, I was left with additional areas of reflection. It was my desire to identify and discuss the achieved PLC stages within MSHS, in addition to my primary and secondary exploratory questions to support my inquiry. It was also my desire to identify and discuss Individual Professional Growth Plans.

Richard and Rebecca DuFour's "Seven Stages of PLCs" is the foundational core to which implementation and progress of the PLC initiative is incorporated within MSHS. As instructional staff members and administrators strengthen their engagement in the collaborative process, they can progress through the 7 stages. Interview and survey data revealed the PLC stages at MSHS varied from a stage 2 to a stage 6, with Language Arts being the most effectively performing PLC. The average PLC stage at MSHS was at a stage 4.5. This is slightly higher than the district PLC average which was stage 4.

According to the survey and interview data, some of the respondents perceived benefits of having an Individual Professional Growth Plan. Although beneficial perceptions existed, the majority of teachers perceived that their IPGP did not relate to student achievement. These data indicated the respondents perceived engaging in the IPGP process as a compliance task rather than as a strategy to impact instructional practices or student achievement. Engaging in this process was also perceived as ineffective time usage for individuals who were already pressured with time constraints.

Although I received respondent data that was negative and unclear, the overall results I obtained from my program evaluation of one Professional Learning Community at MSHS were positive. Instructional and administrative staff of MSHS are engaging in the PLC process and believe in the potential positive effects that can be achieved. Teaching and planning independently are becoming the exception while working collaboratively within content or grade level teams is becoming the preferred norm. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident and comfortable with sharing best practice strategies with increased instructional capacity. Teachers are achieving positive student gains and achievement growth. Although positive results were obtained, additional resources, time, and continued professional development need to be reserved to maintain the PLC implementation process at MSHS.

Recommendations

Professional Learning Communities facilitate advantageous gains for both instructional staff and students. Teachers are empowered with improved instructional initiatives, while students are potentially propelled into learning gains. When teachers attain success without incorporating collaborative efforts, shifting them towards PLCs may prove to be a daunting task. John Kotter and Lorne Whitehead (2010) state it is necessary to adapt because life evolves (Kotter, & Whitehead, 2010). To maintain success during the evolution process, change is necessary. Resistance of the PLC initiative can damper the instructional progress and can potentially damper improved learning. The potential beneficial gains of implemented PLCs outweigh the allowance of resistance to the professional development initiative. The required steps of what should take place to address this caliber of organizational change would necessitate the

incorporation of an adaptive change that would address resistance of the implementation of PLCs.

The organizational changes I would like to make regarding resistance of the PLC initiative resonate around the direct account of eradicating PLC resistance from MSHS instructional staff and administrators. Alexander Grashow, Ronald Heifetz, & Marty Linsky (2009) state that addressing adaptive challenges, (such as the resistance of implemented PLCs), requires facilitating changes in thoughts, beliefs, habitual mannerisms, and overall priorities (Grashow et al., 2009). Because adaptive challenges typically do not have an easily identifiable solution, I need to further assess the core reasons for the resistance and ensure instructional staff and administrators have a keen understanding of the purpose and goal of Professional Learning Communities.

I selected resistance of Professional Learning Communities as the issue in need of organizational change because of the direct connection resistance can potentially have on student learning. When instructional staff and administrators resist the PLC process, they affect the possibility of improved learning for all students. Richard Dufour and Michael Fullan (2013) state that “PLCs can play a central role in dramatically improving the overall performance of schools, the engagement of students, and the sense of efficacy and job satisfaction of educators (DuFour, & Fullan, 2013, p. 4). The potential benefits of PLCs can impact individual schools, as well as entire school districts. Likewise, resistance to PLC initiatives by instructional staff and administrators may negatively shift individual schools and school districts.

CHAPTER FIVE: TO-BE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

As a result of my data analysis in Chapter 4, I identified the need for incorporating an adaptive organizational change plan. Resistance of the PLC implementation process was a major theme prevalent throughout my survey and interview data. Instructional staff refusing to engage in collaborative lesson planning practices, as well as electing to work in isolation, are two key ways in which resistance was manifesting within MSHS. By incorporating a change plan that would address these two key issues that were raised in my previous chapter, I was able to minimize opportunities for resistance to the implementation of PLCs within MSHS.

Review of Literature Related to Change

The incorporation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model has become a key strategy for school districts throughout the United States to achieve the instructional collaboration needed to improve student achievement. PLCs have been in existence in business and educational arenas since at least 1993. With a focus, dedication, and commitment to the learning of each individual student, PLCs have the potential of changing individual schools and entire school districts. To achieve this caliber of change, administrative and instructional educators must commit to a clear vision and purpose for change. They must have a clear understanding for the compelling reasons why change is needed. And they must be willing to give and receive accountability for their individual actions towards accomplishing the incorporated change. Defined as a composition of “collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010,

pg. 11), change towards PLCs fosters a systemic approach towards high levels of learning. Author and PLC Consultant Timothy Kanold (2011) states that change towards PLCs can have an innate ability to attract organizations because of the ability of incorporated PLCs to build instructional capacity and skill set. Kanold also believes that change towards PLCs will facilitate empowerment and growth of teachers and administrators dedicated to improving student learning (Kanold, 2011). Kanold further states that through PLCs, schools are able to experience change that is built on foundational levels of reciprocal accountability (Kanold, 2011). Although the change towards PLC implementation is supported by scholarly researchers as making a positive impact on increased student achievement, resistance to PLC implementation continues to be an ongoing problem in need of urgent change.

Ineffective Implementation of Professional Learning Communities

To achieve sustained substantial student learning gains and overall school academic improvements, embracing change towards developing educational capacity towards operating as effective PLCs is paramount (DuFour, & Fullan, 2013). Successfully engaging in PLC work requires members to have a clear understanding of the reasons for the incorporated change. PLC members should have unified sentiments regarding the vision for the incorporated change. Being receptive and welcoming of the change process should also be present when a shift towards implementing PLCs is completed effectively. In a properly implemented PLC, teachers and administrators work collectively to ensure that all students receive differentiated and rigorous instruction based on their specific needs.

When incorporating systemic change towards implementing PLCs, failure to establish clarity of the PLC process is one of the greatest factors of ineffective implementation. Marcus Buckingham (2005) stated that effective implementation of the PLC process is impossible unless educators are provided with a thorough and shared understanding of the collaborative environment they are attempting to create. Buckingham further states that effective implementation of change will not occur without clarity of the change process (Buckingham, 2005). Incorporating change towards PLC implementation can be a daunting task for instructional staff members and administrators. Attempting to implement this change when all key stakeholders are unclear of what a PLC entails is virtually unfeasible. To effectively implement change towards the PLC process, educational leaders must project a crystal-clear vision, expectation, and understanding of PLCs. The vision must be meticulously planned and well thought out and should provoke intentional change. Austin Buffum, Mike Mattos, and Janet Malone (2018) stated that spearheading a change initiative requires vigilant and calculated planning to increase the likelihood of the implemented change taking root and sustaining over time (Buffum et al., 2018). Implementing PLCs in this manner can potentially increase effective change and address factors that may result in resistance.

Creating clarity and coherence when communicating expectations is a critical characteristic of effective instructional leaders. Having this skillset when implementing change is imperative for school leaders. Effective change is not achieved if educational leaders fail to provide clear and repetitive understanding of the change initiative (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Communicating with clarity to achieve change is a skillset that requires the ability of educational leaders to project program

initiatives, such as PLCs, with embedded coherence and alignment of the goals and purposes for the change (Louis, et al., 2010). To evade ineffective implementation of PLCs, the change process should be embedded with building lucidness of the characteristics of PLCs and how the change process towards a PLC culture can potentially impact instructional practices and student achievement.

Effective leaders understand the importance of establishing goals when implementing PLCs. Transformational leaders also understand that ineffective implementation of PLCs results from the inability to achieve action towards the established goals. Richard Rumelt (2011) stated that insufficient aspirations towards achieving goals can impede a change initiative. Although educators are able to easily identify potential goals, little attention is given to appropriately identifying the challenges of the change initiative or developing the action steps needed to successfully make progress towards the intended change (Rumelt, 2011). Ineffective PLC implementation results from the inability to properly identify challenges and issues of the implementation process, as well as from failing to take action once the challenges and issues of the initiative have been identified.

Failing to take actions to address challenges and issues identified when incorporating organizational change can result in an inability to successfully implement the initiative. Challenges and issues of implementing PLCs, such as resistance, must be addressed to avoid dysfunction of the change initiative. Steven Weber (2011) stated that unaddressed dysfunctional behavior when implementing a change initiative, such as addressing the resistance of PLCs, can cause interference and impede progress towards achieving the goal of the implemented change (Weber, 2011). Resistance of the PLC

process, such as failing to establish or address team members who fail to adhere to team norms, creates difficulty and dysfunction within the PLC team, and can result in ineffective change implementation. Roger Schwarz (2013) stated this manner of dysfunction breeds an environment where colleagues engage in discussing personal thoughts rather than engaging in the discussion of essential questions for PLCs (Schwarz, 2013). This type of dysfunction and resistance of the PLC process can lead to miscommunication and potentially impede progression of the needed change initiative.

Failure to address identified miscommunication associated with resistance to PLC implementation can facilitate a toxic school environment. Effective communication of PLC team members is a critical component of properly implemented change. Education Consultants Jennifer Abrams and Valerie von Frank (2014) referred to this level of communication as the essential characteristic needed to have successful PLC teams. Abrams and von Frank also stated that effective communication is equivalent to the combined intellect and knowledge of the educators within the team (Abrams, & von Frank, 2014). Increased levels of dysfunction surface when members of a PLC are unable to establish lines of communication. PLC members are unable to properly discuss instructional strategies, as well as student data trends, aimed towards improving overall student achievement. Breakdown of communication also creates barriers to the professional bond needed to have effective PLC teams. Author Patrick Lencioni (2014) stated that this level of dysfunction prevents the development of the necessary trust needed for change to be established. Lencioni further stated that because of a lack of trust, resistance of the PLC change process creates an environment where team members have reluctance to openly admit areas of deficiencies and weaknesses regarding their

instructional practice and diminishes the likelihood of team members to solicit assistance or guidance from members of their PLC (Lencioni, 2014). Working with key stakeholders within the PLC community to establish the necessary trust to work collegially is essential for effective implementation of a change initiative to address resistance of the process.

Effective PLC teams are comprised of a multitude of individual personalities, characteristics, and varying skillsets. To become an operative PLC, the team members must reach common ground on how to blend their shared experiences and instructional strengths. When faced with addressing resistance, the combination of educators within a PLC team can be challenging. In earlier research on addressing resistance and dysfunction within a PLC, Patrick Lencioni (2002) stated that although members of a comprised team bring strengths, they each also bring aspects of weakness and areas of growth opportunity that are in need of improvement (Lencioni, 2002). Each member of a PLC brings vulnerability and incompleteness that must be overcome to achieve an effectively implemented PLC.

Educational researchers, Richard Penny and Rachel Sims (2015), also attributed ineffective implementation of organizational change, such as PLC implementation, on miscommunication. Penny and Sims state that an important factor in successful PLCs is the ability to properly communicate the shared vision for the change, and the ability to establish trust among colleagues. Trust, as well as support, are the components that facilitate successful collaboration and can prevent resistance of change initiatives, such as PLCs (Penny, & Simms, 2015). Failure to implement the needed change to address miscommunication that facilitates resistance can lead to cancerous dysfunction

throughout a school. Rosemary Webb, Graham Vulliamy, Anneli Sarja, Seppo Hämäläinen, and Pirjo-Liisa Poikonen (2009) referred to this type of ineffective implementation as a factor that can alter and effect the atmosphere within a school (Webb, et al., 2009). Without established confidence and comradery, the necessary environment for effective collaboration and support needed to foster collegial relationships within a PLC may not be established. If left unaddressed, this atmosphere will foster resistance of a change initiative and can lead to ineffective implementation of PLCs.

Fixed Mindsets vs. Growth Mindsets

Our mindset is defined as our perceptions, thoughts, or beliefs about our skills and abilities. Student achievement researcher Carol Dweck (2006) stated our mindset can determine our entire perception regarding our attainable actions and opportunities (Dweck, 2006). A growth mindset is considered the ideal mindset because it provides us with the benefit of having an optimistic belief that we can accomplish our tasks and goals through continual improvement and development. A fixed mindset is not as beneficial and is considered as the pessimistic mindset with an unchangeable belief about change (Dweck, 2006). When faced with acclimating to a change initiative, such as the implementation of PLCs, the mindset of the individual undergoing the proposed change can determine the acquisition or resistance to the implemented change. An individual with a growth mindset will welcome the proposed change and view it as an opportunity to continually grow and improve on best practices. While an individual with a fixed mindset will view the change as an unnecessary intrusion and will demonstrate resistance to the proposed change. Reza Zolfagharifard (2015) stated our mindsets shape our

character and ultimately determine how we view our potential success or failure regarding change (Zolfagharifard, 2015).

Professional Learning Communities are most effective when they are immersed within a culture receptive to change and when they involve welcomed collaboration of professionals with growth mindsets. Engaging in a PLC with a fixed mindset typically does not yield the same results. Resistance to the implementation of PLCs is usually the result of fixed mindsets. Dweck (2006) stated that when faced with change, individuals with fixed mindsets become judgmental and are resistant to engaging in the change initiative (Dweck, 2006). Successful collaboration requires engagement and participation from all participants with mutual respect and input from all members. The fixed mindset mentality hinders the positive effects of PLCs.

Implementing schoolwide PLCs is a type of adaptive organizational change that entails a shifting of mindsets within a school culture. The state of mind of each stakeholder within the school regarding implemented change can influence the acquisition of the new initiative. Leading researcher Peter Gollwitzer (1999) stated that implementation of a change initiative causes individuals who undergo the change process to transfer their behavior on to the culture within the organization (Gollwitzer, 1999). The environment and culture of a school can be influenced by the educators' beliefs and state of mind regarding engaging in PLCs. If a negative mindset is present, there is potential for negativity to emerge throughout the school.

Conclusion

Reviewing the listed literature provided me with a deeper contextual understanding of the implementation and potential causes of resistance within

Professional Learning Communities by members. This literature helps me better understand and shape my understanding of the change perspective needed to address the causes of resistance to PLCs by instructional staff members and administrators. The benefits of PLCs can be powerful and positively impact school change to achieve learning gains. Jim Knight (2009) stated that when instructional practices improve, a strong correlation to improved student achievement can also occur (Knight, 2009). Successful PLCs provide instructional staff with the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues. During this collaboration and student data analysis, instructional practices that best address the specific needs of students can be shared among the PLC members. Resistance to the implementation of PLCs impedes this process.

Carol Chanter and Rosemarye Taylor (2016) described the benefits of PLCs as a coaching partnership that provides a strategy for improving schoolwide professional practice that improves student learning (Chanter, & Taylor, 2016). Through instructional practice reflection that occurs within PLCs, instructional staff members and administrators have the potential to become change agents who work collaboratively to achieve improved learning. With a structured professional development initiative in place and a desire to increase student learning gains on state assessments, change towards PLC implementation can provide MSHS a powerful tool for change and student learning improvement.

Resistance to this beneficial best practice strategy can impact learning gains and cause student improvement to stagnant. Increased student learning gains are the definitive goals of MSHS. Proposing change that addresses the resistance of some instructional staff members and administrators towards the PLC process is essential to prevent

interference with student learning gains. Proposing adaptive change of this magnitude requires a unified vision focused on acclimating to the modifications for growth and improvement, with clear and consistent communication. Additionally, trust in the leaders proposing the change is critical.

Authors Tony Wagner, Robert Kegan, Lisa Lahey, Richard Lemons, Jude Garnier, Deborah Helsing, Annie Howell, and Harriet Rasmussen (2006) described adaptive change best and state that accomplishing this type of change requires individuals with a growth mindset willing to shift their thinking, feeling, and acting. They also affirmed the need and importance in providing the reasons why change is proposed in the first place to assist in establishing the needed trust (Garnier, Helsing, Howell, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Rasmussen, & Wagner, 2006). When the urgency for adaptive change has been established, instructional staff members and administrators are more likely to be receptive to the change rather than resistant. This is achieved by providing the background knowledge and impactful benefits of the change, such as the positive or negative effects on increased student learning.

Envisioning the Success TO-BE

The overall goal for my “TO BE” model (Appendix N: TO BE 4 C’s Analysis) was to develop a plan for organizational change that started with identifying factors that appeared to impact, or were reflective of, the resistance to Professional Learning Communities at MSHS. Achieving this goal would greatly diminish, or even rid, MSHS of resistance to the PLC implementation initiative. During the 2016-2017 school year, I implemented the goal focused on implementing a change plan that shifted the belief and instructional practices of faculty and staff. We were able to create a plan that would

positively impact student learning gains by creating an environment built on a foundation of collaboration.

Contexts

Middle High School District stakeholders place high emphasis on student success and achievement. The need for change and the strengthening of instructional practices was imperative because an identified decline of student learning gains on assessments was recognized. The goal of the school district is to achieve student success for all students within the district. MSHS was able to shift towards accomplishing the goal of student success by incorporating the districtwide emphasis on the implementation of PLCs. Successfully implementing the collaborative instructional structures within a PLC would increase student proficiency and pass rate on high stakes state and national assessments, such as College Board Advanced Placement tests at MSHS. Increases in student aptitude would facilitate a closing of the achievement gap between subgroups at MSHS. The continual decline of student achievement would be addressed if the administrative and instructional staff at MSHS engage in the established practices associated with effective learning communities.

Culture

MSHS has the greatest growth potential in the area of culture because of past years of stellar academic achievement and success. Instructional staff elect to work in isolation rather than collaboratively because they have been able to achieve success on their own. Teachers elect to withhold best practice strategies rather than sharing lesson plans and instructional techniques with colleagues. A culture of division and competitiveness exists instead of fostering a culture built on the establishment of teams.

A shift towards a growth mindset culture would be established by addressing the fixed mindsets of some administrators and instructional staff at MSHS. A culture built on a belief of openness and growth would foster and strengthen collaborative lesson planning among instructional staff. This environment refocuses the emphasis on the needs of all students rather than on personal agendas on instructional staff. A growth mindset culture would facilitate continuous improvement of student achievement because this caliber of collaboration is ongoing and provides opportunities for two-way dialogue between administrators and instructional staff.

Conditions

Establishing the ideal conditions for my study in MSHS would require addressing several key areas of growth opportunities and improvement. Currently, MSHS has 49 instructional staff members that provide instruction for students in 6th – 12th grade. Because of the small size of the instructional staff at MSHS, there are content area subjects that are taught by only one teacher in the entire school. It is also common for members of the small faculty to also be assigned multiple instructional content areas. This causes difficulty in the ability to engage in collaborative lesson planning opportunities. Incorporating a change plan to address these areas would create ideal conditions at MSHS. Intentional master scheduling considers the importance of minimizing the assignment of multiple courses to instructional staff. Scheduling common planning periods based on content areas and grade levels is a major component to achieving ideal conditions. Teachers are afforded opportunities to engage in collaborative practices with administrators and colleagues by creating this time within the instructional day. Ideal PLCs also foster aspiring leaders to serve and leaders of their

learning community. Teachers that are new to MSHS are also supported with professional development strategies to be successful within their assigned PLC.

Competencies

Teachers at MSHS were accustomed to working in isolation, so transitioning to collaborative practices was challenging for some of them. Just as it is important to build the capacity and knowledge base of our students, it was important to develop the understanding of MSHS instructional staff on how to effectively collaborate. There is a difference between conducting a traditional department meeting and engaging in an effective PLC. Just as this was a new practice for instructional staff members, it was a new initiative for administrators. The administrative team lacked the skill set to properly guide and instructionally coach teachers through the PLC process. The ideal competencies related to my study facilitate imperative and ongoing opportunities for instructional staff and administrators to be educated on the appropriate manner to engage in collaborative practices and how to properly progress throughout the Seven Stages of PLCs.

Conclusion

Accomplishing systemic change to achieve sustained student learning gains is not an undertaking that educational leaders should engage in lightheartedly. This type of adaptive change should not be considered by school leaders without meticulous, well developed, and intentional strategic planning. As I considered this manner of needed change, I was placed in a compromising position of considering both the beneficial gains that could be achieved by successfully implementing PLCs, as well as the negative impact that could result. As a progressive new leader, I knew that the positive impact of

PLCs far outweighed any potential negative impact. I knew that envisioning the success of my “TO BE” context, culture, conditions, and competencies were priceless if I wanted to truly achieve my goal of annihilating forms of resistance from the PLC process at MSHS.

My “4Cs TO BE” organizational chart depicts a vision of the future at MSHS where the problems attributing to resistance have been resolved. Successfully achieving my vision for change would facilitate the levels of empowerment needed in strong learning communities. Reciprocal accountability by instructional staff and administrators would be established with this level of enablement. Educators, both teachers and school leaders, would have ideal conditions to work collectively and collaboratively towards self-improvement, and then student learning improvement. PLC members would engage in effective communication of the expectations with clarity and consistency. By shifting MSHS from my “AS IS” state to my envisioned “TO BE” goal, I was confident that the embedded change needed to address resistance would be achieved.

As a result of my incorporated change plan, causes of resistance to the implementation of PLCs by some instructional staff members and administrators were addressed. These PLC implementation changes can have an overall impact on student learning at MSHS. Key stakeholders are provided with a greater understanding of the need for my proposed change action plan by strategically planning and establishing the sense of urgency. When implemented with fidelity, PLCs can improve student learning gains. Failure to reduce or remove resistance to this implementation process by some instructional staff and administrators can potentially hinder or impede student learning improvement.

CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Introduction

To successfully confront an adaptive challenge, effective interventions must be designed and implemented. Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky (2009) stated that when effective interventions are implemented, they mobilize individuals to overcome adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). Although interventions can aid in the process of incorporating organizational change, to achieve change that is operative, the interventions must encompass effective strategies and actions. A vision for change can be achieved when intentional strategies are incorporated with proactive and reactive actions. As MSHS continues to implement Professional Learning Communities, the first step to address challenges that impact the change initiative, such as intentional and unintentional resistance of the model, begins by incorporating consistent actions to strategies geared towards organizational change.

The main areas that need to be addressed at MSHS for my organizational change plan to come into fruition revolve around the resistance of the Professional Learning Communities reform initiative. The concept of PLCs is grounded on refining instructional teaching practices to improve student learning. Potential positive change to student learning can be halted when this concept of instructional collaboration is not fully embraced, and resistance sets in. In MSHS, areas of resistance by some instructional and administrative staff to be addressed center around the four arenas for change. Specific areas in need of change at MSHS fall within the context, culture, conditions, and competencies that cause an inability to properly acclimate to a district-wide initiative. These needs at MSHS also influence the school environment, cause magnification of time

constraints, and reveal the limited knowledge base of the staff to properly implement effective PLCs. Change is needed to address achievement gaps between student subgroups. Another area in need of change centers around the restriction of the current bell schedule to allow time for PLC participation during the instructional school day at MSHS. And one of the most critical areas in need of change is grounded on the need to have a schoolwide cultural shifting of minds regarding the benefits of working collaboratively. Failing to address these areas in need of change will impact student learning at MSHS.

Strategies and Actions

The strategies that were required for organizational change in MSHS were based on best practice in organizational theory, professional development, leadership, and communication strategies (Appendix O). When planning for the appropriate strategies to incorporate at MSHS, I needed to carefully consider my decisions and the strength of my vision for change. Besides establishing the urgent need for change, deciding how to address the needed change was the most critical step in the change process. John Kotter (1996) stated that “strategy provides both a logic and a first level of detail to show how a vision can be accomplished (Kotter, 1996, p. 75). Ultimately, the effectiveness of an implemented vision for change can be predicted by the quality of strategies used.

One strategy I incorporated that addressed the needed change at MSHS was to elicit support for change by developing a team-oriented guiding coalition. This coalition was comprised of both administrative and instructional staff members who all understand and have a belief in the vision for change. Leadership strategies embedded within a guiding coalition were enhanced because members of the coalition developed the

capacity to inspire and influence the mindsets of colleagues during the change process. The coalition had the ability to develop and convey key messages regarding the change initiative to key stakeholders by incorporating effective communication strategies. This was a critical component because effective change is difficult to achieve if the vision and purpose for the change is not properly communicated.

Proper communication entails addressing all of the misperceptions that are embedded within a vision for change. It also involves ensuring that all key stakeholders have a clear understanding of the drive, benefits, expectations, and reasons why the vision for change is needed. Properly communicated information involves a two-way conversation between the deliverer and the receiver of the conveyed message. Authors Lawrence Robinson, Jeanne Segal, and Melinda Smith shared my sentiment regarding proper communication. They state that this level of effective communication is more complex than just the mere exchange of dialogue. They further stated that effective communication occurs when there is a true understanding of the intent of the conveyed message (Robinson, Segal, & Smith, 2018). In essence, to properly communicate my vision, I had to be willing to allow and respond to questions or concerns of MSHS staff members regarding the vision for implemented PLCs. I also had to make sure that after addressing the misconceptions, everyone understood the reasons why the change was needed.

John Kotter's philosophy on organizational theory (1996) stated that a powerful guiding coalition linked by a unified vision can have the capacity to implement change despite resistance that may be present (Kotter, 1996). Although members of the coalition may have different viewpoints about organizational change, they should all have one

major commonality, the desire to improve student learning. Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky (2009) stated that adaptive work, such as the work to address the needed change at MSHS, involves bringing together a group of individuals passionate about their points of view. Although the points of view may be contrasting, they are all beneficial in equipping the group with various perspectives which can generate interventions to assist in addressing the most pressing areas in need of change (Heifetz, et al., 2009). Bringing a group together can be risky and even intensify resistance. However, the benefits of a guiding coalition for change outweigh the hazards.

Another strategy that increased support for the needed change at MSHS was to foster a school culture and atmosphere of trust. Trust is a vital component for school leaders initiating organizational change, such as the implementation of PLCs. To help teachers of MSHS shift from a culture of instructional isolation to a culture grounded on collaborative practices, leadership strategies on implementing relational trust had to be incorporated. Co-authors Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2003) stated that school cultures that exhibit strong relational trust among all key stakeholders are more likely to successfully implement a change initiative because fostering a school culture and atmosphere of trust reduces the sense of vulnerability and risk associated with change (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003). A school culture with strong trust fosters an environment where stakeholders are willing to implement communication strategies to engage in the hard conversations associated with improving student achievement. The presence of trust is a starting point of the social exchange and vulnerability teachers experience when engaging in the PLC process. In a study of 400 Chicago schools, Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2003) determined that schools with high relational trust among all

stakeholders had a greater chance of achieving improved student learning. Their organizational theory research identified increased student learning from “8% in reading and 20% in mathematics in a five-year period” within schools that fostered cultures of trust (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003, p. 44). Bryk and Schneider also suggested that schools without the presence of relational trust had minimal to nonexistent student learning gains (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003). Student learning increases and improves in schools that exhibit trust.

When I was appointed as a new principal of MSHS in 2015, I was able to determine that the condition of trust among key stakeholders was not present. I was the third principal for MSHS within the past four years, and my appointment at MSHS was my first principalship. Right from the start, I discovered that a cultural shifting was desperately needed to address the lack of leadership consistency and the lack of administrative trust that was present at MSHS. Although new to the role of school administrator, I had the competency level to understand that attempting to engage in any form of school reform or change would be pointless until I addressed the absence of trust among key stakeholders.

A third strategy that addressed the needed change at MSHS was to incorporate professional development opportunities for all administrative and instructional staff that provides clear structure and communication strategies. The professional development opportunities would offer detailed explanations of the purpose for the PLC initiative. In essence, this strategy provides the why behind PLCs. Through interactive and intentional professional development opportunities and learning tasks, all staff members of MSHS receive foundational knowledge of how to properly engage in collaborative work.

Through the development of techniques with on-going progress monitoring, staff members of MSHS have opportunities to strengthen their ability to foster collaboration within a PLC. Sylvia Pirtle and Ed Tobia (2014) stated that developing effective PLCs requires focus on increasing instructional capacity on collaborative professional learning, as well as improving teacher's ability to self-reflect to improve their instructional practice. Their organizational theory also states that incorporating effective professional development that defines what teachers and administrators do while engaging in PLCs can enhance student learning (Pirtle & Tobia, 2014). MSHS instructional staff members' skillset are enhanced by incorporating a strategy that places emphasis on specific professional learning opportunities aimed at properly engaging in the work of PLCs.

As a new school principal, structured professional development strengthened my ability to utilize leadership strategies that aided in supporting my instructional staff with acclimating to the PLC process. At MSHS, all three administrators are fairly new to the school. One of the school leaders was appointed to administration from a classroom instructional position and was not given the opportunity to acquire school leadership skills in a semi-administrative role such as an administrative dean or instructional coach. Sylvia Pirtle and Ed Tobia (2014) stated that the ability to implement effective PLCs requires school leaders to have the knowledge base and skillset to provide the instructional support and feedback needed (Pirtle, & Tobia, 2014). The current competency level of administrators was positively addressed by incorporating a strategy focused on structured professional development.

The actions needed to achieve the strategies required for organizational change in MSHS are based on the prominent areas I identified after analyzing survey, interview,

and observation data pertaining to the implementation of PLCs. Incorporating appropriate strategies was a critical phase of initiating change reform. However, identifying the correct strategy to address an area in need of change is meaningless without integrating appropriate actions that facilitate achievement of the change goal. Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky (2009) stated that taking action and learning from implemented actions is the only way to move adaptive change forward (Heifetz, et al., 2009). It was important that I incorporate effective actions in response to the identified leadership strategies to address the needed change at MSHS. It was also imperative that I demonstrate actions consistent to the communication strategies shared to successfully achieve the reform initiative. Just as I had to meticulously plan appropriate strategies, I had to systematically plan intentional and strategic actions to address areas in need of change at MSHS.

Once established, one of the first actions of an implemented guiding coalition is to develop a vision to successfully implement a change initiative. John Kotter (1996) stated that establishing a vision is essential because a vision is the core to proper alignment of actions. Failure to establish an appropriate vision can damper effective efforts towards organizational change. The vision at MSHS emphasized developing a plan for change that would overcome the resistance of successful schoolwide PLCs. Once a unified plan was established, the next action of the MSHS coalition was to strategize how to remove barriers that impede the progress of the change initiative. John Kotter (2014) claimed this action as an essential step in identifying, addressing, and removing barriers that impede organizational change efforts.

Instructional and administrative surveys, plus interview data, identified a lack of time to engage in the PLC process as one of the major barriers and conditions leading to resistance of the PLC initiative. Removing this barrier required the guiding coalition to initiate actions to develop time during the instructional school day to dedicate to engaging in PLCs. The coalition was aware that addressing this condition at MSHS would potentially decrease resistance because instructional and administrative staff members would be afforded the valuable time needed for PLCs. Failure to take action against time limitation barriers makes it virtually impossible to end PLC resistance. Instructional and administrative staff at MSHS would continue to imply that they are unable to engage in the PLC process because they simply do not have the time to participate.

Effective leadership strategies suggest that leaders of change understand the importance of providing time for staff members to engage in initiatives. As a result, the collective efforts of the instructional and administrative members of the guiding coalition resulted in successfully completing actions to develop a revised Wednesday bell schedule (Appendix P). The revised schedule afforded MSHS staff members with dedicated time to engage in the PLC process during the instructional school day. This time did not interfere with contractual rights of teachers regarding their designated planning periods or lunch. The newly developed schedule also provided for 1-2 hours per week for all staff to engage in their content area PLC.

The next action of the guiding coalition solidified the sense of urgency regarding the change reform. Effective communication strategies of the coalition aided in properly communicating the vision as it revised the Wednesday schedule (Appendix P) to include

the full faculty and staff at MSHS. John Kotter and Lorne Whitehead (2010) stated that effective communication of the vision and strategies of a change plan can facilitate substantial buy-in. This caliber of agreement to the change plan was achieved at MSHS by including all key stakeholders within the school as members of the guiding coalition and decision makers regarding the incorporated revisions. This non-verbal action communicated that I valued the time of instructional staff members and viewed the PLC process important enough to incorporate the needed change. I believe this action also led to the initial stages of shifting the mindsets of some of the staff members of MSHS.

Actions that incorporate strategies aimed at fostering a school culture and environment of relational trust begin with the school principal. Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2003) stated that actions taken by the principal play a vital role in facilitating and maintaining the trust of staff members. They also stated that trust is established when principals make it a priority to demonstrate respect, actively listen to staff, and avoid making arbitrary actions (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003). Failure to establish a school culture that exhibits trust among administrators and instructional staff can result in a school culture that rejects change initiatives.

To begin the process of developing trust at MSHS, I incorporated actions that demonstrated my willingness to be honest, reliable, competent, and consistent. Before engaging in conversations regarding the need to shift from a culture of instructional isolation to a culture of collaboration, I demonstrated actions that addressed the absence of trust. Fixed mindsets of instructional staff and administrators at MSHS would remain unchanged about the PLC process without the presence of trust. Instructional staff members would never display a willingness to venture into instructional leadership roles

if the condition of trust was not established. Because trust was still in the process of being developed, my actions during the PLC implementation process focused on providing the needed structures and supports to empower and strengthen teachers as they engaged in the change initiative. I also incorporated progress monitoring actions to gauge the effectiveness of the implemented PLCs. Finally, instructional staff interview and survey data informed me that actions were needed to incorporate instructional focus groups and climate surveys to facilitate trust, as well as provide opportunities to encourage collaboration.

Actions to address the final strategy required for organizational change aided in building the capacity of MSHS administrators and instructional staff members. Engaging in organizational change without clear structure and communication strategies describing the purpose of PLCs can impact the success change efforts. Initiating a new practice without proper preparation diminishes the likelihood of success of the practice and increases the probability that resistance will result. Providing the skillset, resources, and on-going support needed when introducing a new initiative are beneficial actions to increase success opportunities and reduces possibility for resistance. Sylvia Pirtle and Ed Tobia (2014) stated that interactive professional development experiences provide the systemic coherence regarding the PLC process needed for successful change. Administrators and teachers must be equipped with the skills needed to successfully engage in collaboration.

MSHS interview, survey, and PLC observation data informed me that the respondents did not have a clear understanding of engaging in PLCs beyond their content area. These data were insightful for me because they allowed me to determine a

disconnect of instructional staff between working collaboratively within their PLC and developing their personal professional growth goal. These data also inferred that additional professional development on collectively working towards establishing individual growth goals was needed. Data analysis allowed me to infer the need for actions that incorporate sharing the purpose and reasons for incorporating the PLC initiative.

Leadership strategies used to build the capacity of instructional staff engaging in the PLC process caused me to include actions on the structured approach to identify and define the roles of PLC members. Actions were needed to strengthen the knowledge of identifying and understanding power standards and appropriate assessment techniques. Structured enrichment was needed to strengthen common lesson planning and common assessment knowledge. Targeted activities were also needed to assist teachers on analyzing student data and adapting instruction based on the observed data. Communication strategies used to convey the professional expectations led me to incorporate actions to support the behaviors and practices needed for productive and successful PLCs.

Beneficial gains were achieved with the actions incorporated to strengthen understanding of the PLC process. The staff of MSHS began to understand why the PLC initiative was an avenue to facilitate positive benefits and increased student learning. Inexperienced instructional staff and administrators were empowered with collaborative skillsets that allowed them to embrace the PLC process rather than be resistant to it.

Strategies and actions based on my research included initiatives to overcome resistance to PLC implementation by some instructional and administrative staff to

achieve the overall goal of increased student achievement. Using Wagner et al. (2006) *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide for Transforming Our Schools*, I incorporated the four arenas for change, Context, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies to develop effective strategies to address the areas in need of change at MSHS. I placed emphasis on best practices in organizational theory, professional development, leadership strategies, and communication strategies. The actions to the incorporated strategies provided opportunities to successfully address the areas in need of change at MSHS. The “Strategies and Action Chart” (Appendix O) describes appropriate methods for promoting improvement and provides a creative charted view of my organizational change plan.

Under the Context domain of my Strategies and Actions Chart, I incorporated strategies based on the organizational theory of researchers, such as John Kotter (1996), who affirmed the power of executing action to develop a guiding coalition as a strategy to continue the schoolwide PLC implementation process at MSHS (Kotter, 1996). Researchers such as Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky (2009) supported taking action through a unified guiding coalition. The adaptive work and actions needed to ensure all content area instructional staff and administrators at MSHS participated in the PLC process is enhanced from the various perspectives of working collectively within a strategic guiding coalition (Heifetz, 2009). Incorporating a guiding coalition as a strategy to address the resistance of the PLC implementation process, would only determine beneficial gains in MSHS if I also devised and engaged in the essential actions needed to overcome this challenge. The first and most essential action of

the guiding coalition was the development of the vision for overcoming resistance to schoolwide PLC implementation at MSHS.

As the school leader, it was vital for me to strategically identify the ideal staff to serve as the guiding coalition. As the leader, I had to strategically utilize my areas of control and influence to develop the needed coalition. Once developed, I used effective leadership skills to work within the coalition to identify and design professional development geared towards strengthening collaborative skills of instructional staff to work collectively when developing their individual professional growth goals. Just as it was essential for the guiding coalition to develop a vision, it is equally important for instructional staff to develop their goal for instruction.

The focal point of the guiding coalition shifted towards strategically developing focused professional development once teachers were provided with opportunities to develop their personal goals for instruction and a schoolwide vision for instruction was created. The training was intentionally focused on strengthening instructional skillset on identifying and understanding power standards, effectively analyzing student data, and categorizing appropriate assessment techniques. For teachers to engage in the practice of improving student assessment and learning, they must first become proficient in understanding learning targets embedded within core standards. They must also know how to incorporate appropriate instructional strategies to differentiate the needs of all students based on students' level of understanding of core standards.

Communication between members of the guiding coalition is the second most important aspect of the collective group, second to establishing the vision. Failure to establish communication within the coalition will result in a failed attempt to begin action

steps towards change. Although members of the guiding coalition brought varied background knowledge, skillsets, and perceptions about collaboratively engaging in the PLC process to the group, we were able to establish effective communication. Our communication within the coalition was transferred to our weekly PLC meetings. Within our assigned PLC, we were able to contribute to student data analysis discussions.

Under the Culture domain of my Strategies and Actions Chart, I incorporated strategies based on the organizational theory of researchers, such as Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2003). I felt it was important to eliminate the lack of trust between administrators and teachers within MSHS (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003). Change will not be successful in a school culture that lacks trust between administrators and instructional staff. Before the guiding coalition began the process of implementing strategies to address areas in need of change, the lack of trust had to be addressed. When MSHS first engaged in the process of collaboration within PLCs, they exhibited limited knowledge on what true collaboration consisted of. The instructional staff was accustomed to working in isolation, so the shift to working collaboratively led to frustration and a resentment for the PLC change initiative. Interview data also revealed that resistance resulted because some of the instructional staff believed that the change towards PLCs was not needed at MSHS based on past years of established school success and recognition. Establishing the needed trust began with me. My consistent actions and willingness to include instructional staff members within the guiding coalition, eventually began to facilitate the needed trust. Once trust was established, the coalition was able to move forward with identifying and addressing barriers of PLC resistance, such as insufficient time.

As a school leader, I always strive to empower members of my team and provide opportunities for them to develop and strengthen their talents. As an effective leader, I identified instructional staff members that aspired to become school leaders to assist me in supporting the PLC process. These aspiring leaders had demonstrated strong depth of content knowledge and shared my vision and belief in the PLC process. The instructional leaders modeled effective engagement in the PLC process with teachers in all content areas. As PLC Leaders and PLC Facilitators, this group of instructional leaders not only provided effective support to the instructional staff of MSHS, but they also assisted in building the PLC knowledge base of administrators within MSHS.

Effective PLC implementation requires the ability for teachers and administrators to have a solid foundation, pedagogy, and understanding of key instructional practices and strategies. A cultural shift towards a collaborative instructional practice that has not been the established norm can cause frustration and potential resistance. Guided professional development from colleagues was a beneficial strategy that addressed frustration and potential resistance at MSHS. I worked with the guiding coalition to provide professional development to MSHS teachers on collaborative lesson planning to address resistance of shifting from planning in isolation. I also ensured that teachers received support on properly implementing all seven stages of the PLC process. The cultural shift towards working collaboratively facilitated instructional discussions on identifying, comprehending, and properly deconstructing power standards. As the culture of MSHS shifted and the mindsets of the staff shifted, I was at a point where I could convey the message that PLCs were a continuous improvement process that had the potential to change MSHS like never before.

Communication was an important factor in the cultural shifting at MSHS. Open two-way dialogue built on the new establishment of trust was an important factor in addressing the cultural state of fixed mindsets among some of the instructional staff and administrators at MSHS. I provided timely feedback to teachers and administrators regarding the progression of each PLC through the seven stages. I also promoted opportunities for PLC Leaders and PLC Facilitators to provide feedback regarding identified areas in need of growth within PLCs. The instructional leaders and I also communicated the progression plans for continuous improvement towards the next PLC stages for each content area.

Under the Conditions domain of my Strategies and Actions Chart, I incorporated strategies based on the organizational theory of researchers, such as John Kotter (2014). Kotter states that failing to address barriers of change typically result in unsuccessful change implementation. I agree with Kotter's credence regarding the importance of addressing barriers. According to Kotter, if I failed to address impeding barriers preventing successful implementation of PLCs, then I would not successfully address areas in need of change. Essentially, Kotter informed me that my effort to implement change would be futile (Kotter, 2014). The conditions at MSHS were not conducive for collaboration. I worked with the guiding coalition to identify a resolution to the greatest barrier, the need for time to collaborate. We developed a modified Wednesday bell schedule that provided time for instructional staff and administrators to meet within their assigned PLCs on a weekly basis. The new schedule provided teachers with times to collaborate that did not interfere with their planning periods or their time for lunch. Interview and survey data notified me that this was a beneficial change, as teachers and

administrators reported having the needed time to engage in the PLC process. These data also revealed that teachers felt valued and buy-in to the initiative increased. I also recommended aspiring leaders to serve as PLC Leaders and PLC Facilitators. These instructional leaders helped to incorporate support for current staff members and served as mentors to acclimate newly hired staff to the collaborative practices at MSHS. Finally, I restructured the master schedule to ensure that conditions for collaboration were considered.

As the school principal, I had leadership authority to incorporate site-based changes that maximized instructional opportunities for students and staff. I used this authority to initiate scheduling changes to maximize opportunities for instructional staff and administrators to implement PLCs. I worked with the PLC instructional leaders to lead weekly data analysis sessions with all content area instructional staff. We also guided all content area PLCs through the continuous seven stage process. Finally, I empowered PLC Leaders and PLC Facilitators to monitor weekly and quarterly progression of each content area PLC stage.

Addressing the conditions within MSHS required me to also address the current knowledge and understanding administrators and staff members held regarding the benefits of PLCs. Attempts to address societal pressures for improved student achievement have historically led to new educational programs and professional development coming and being replaced by the next new program. I had to ensure that every staff member at MSHS understood the beneficial gains, purposes, and reasons why effective PLCs were needed to address resistance of staff members who may have felt that PLCs were just a new program that would soon be released with the next new

program. First, I made it known to all MSHS staff that PLCs were not a program. Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Thomas Many (2010) defined PLCs as an ongoing process comprised of educators working collaboratively in “recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11). To establish full implementation of PLCs with fidelity, every administrator and every instructional staff member of MSHS would need the opportunity to complete the Solutions Tree Professional Learning Communities Institute. This professional development experience would afford MSHS teachers and administrators an opportunity to network with instructional professionals who share a growth mindset regarding the benefits of implemented PLCs. MSHS staff would be enriched by educational experts such as Anthony Muhammad, Mike Mattos, and the power couple Rick and Rebecca DuFour. The purpose of the PLC Institutes is to provide an essential framework to achieve instructional empowerment for increased student learning. Participants are enriched with new approaches, techniques, and instructional best practice strategies to support PLC growth (Solution Tree, 1998). This would provide 100% of the MSHS staff with exposure to the purpose and reasons why PLC implementation is of such importance. Attending this caliber of professional development would provide a method for me to support PLC Leaders and PLC Facilitators with authentic guidance on the PLC process. This, in turn, would allow me to support new instructional staff by having the PLC leaders implement the strategies learned at the institute by guiding new staff through the PLC process. Although I have not been able to implement this strategy fully at MSHS, I have been able to increase the number of staff members exposed to the Solutions Tree PLC Institute each year.

Communication between colleagues is an important characteristic of an effective PLC. Instructional staff at MSHS discussed best practice strategies as they developed lesson plans and common assessments within their PLC. They discussed student assessment data, as well as how to adapt instruction to achieve proficiency for all students. From an administration stance, I increased monitoring and expectation accountability of PLC implementation. I made it a priority that my assistant principals and I attend weekly content area PLCs. We attended PLCs, not as evaluative administrators, but as members of the content area PLCs.

Under the Competencies domain of my Strategies and Actions Chart, I incorporated strategies based on the organizational theory of researchers, such as Sylvia Pirtle and Ed Tobia (2014), because I felt it was critically important for administrators and instructional staff at MSHS to have increased competency regarding the collaborative practices required to successfully engage in PLCs with fidelity (Pirtle, & Tobia, 2014). Engaging in any initiative without the competency level to contribute to the collective group increases the likelihood that the initiative would be rejected or not achieve implementation with fidelity. Administrators at MSHS have all attended the Solutions Tree PLC Institute. MSHS administrators provide effective instructional support and coaching regarding working collaboratively within a PLC after engaging in personal competency building strategies.

Just as the PLC process is continuous and on-going, supporting the staff with continuous and on-going opportunities for learning is essential to building the competency level of administrators and instructional staff. Administrators were provided with enrichment opportunities to continue building capacity and skillset for effectively

supporting the instructional staff of MSHS. Consequently, the skillset of the leaders was then transferred to instructional leaders, who were ready to share best practice strategies with teachers within content area PLCs.

Leading cultural change within an organization requires school leaders to first ensure that they are properly prepared and equipped to implement change. Failure to have the proper pedagogy to lead change can result in a resistant staff. As a properly prepared educational leader, I was able to enhance standards-based knowledge and instructional skillset of MSHS teachers. I provided opportunities to strengthen the foundational knowledge of instructional staff through weekly professional development sessions geared on deconstructing core standards.

Competency building within administrative and instructional staff is enhanced with proper communication. At MSHS, all staff communicated benefits regarding PLC implementation. Interview and survey data revealed that the competency level of respondents, regarding collaboration, increased. These data also informed me of areas for growth opportunities and the need for competency strengthening. I needed to proactively communicate areas of potential resistance and barriers of PLC implementation.

Conclusion

Successful implementation of the PLC process that is free from resistance by instructional and administrative staff is possible. Attainment of success was feasible when effective strategies and actions were incorporated to address areas within MSHS that cause resistance. Jim Knight (2009) affirmed the capability of overcoming resistance. Knight states that leaders of change have the potential to successfully

implement initiatives. He further states that when strategies and actions to achieve change provide quality support, improved instructional capacity is facilitated. Knight also stressed that this caliber of increased knowledge is achieved when professional development is incorporated to acquire pedagogical skills. By integrating a clear and concise understanding of the reasons why change is needed, leaders increase the probability that the incorporated change would be sustained and impactful. Knight further conveys the importance of establishing relational trust among colleagues, as well as the need of leaders to affirm that the change will facilitate positive impact on student learning (Knight, 2009). Considering these suggestions for leading change increases the potential that teachers would implement the reform initiative rather than resist it.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Improved student learning and increased academic achievement are areas in need of enhancements throughout the United States. Middle High School District is not immune to the societal pressures for increased student learning gains. An educational paradigm shift towards accountability and ownership for the student achievement decline over the course of the past 20 years has propelled school districts towards organizational change initiatives. Social demands for change have transferred the need for transformation from what students are learning, to reform movements of professional development for instructional staff. Instructional training beyond the ordinary is needed to address the desired change in student achievement.

Facilitating the desired learning gains that were needed for proficiency in MHSD required professional development that went beyond new instructional knowledge. The caliber of change needed required a focus on the actual instruction delivered. Linda Darling-Hammond and Milbrey McLaughlin (1995) stated that addressing the declining student achievement could be accomplished by shifting from traditional training towards a professional development reform requiring teachers to “rethink their own practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before” (Darling-Hammond, & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 597). Acclimating to this method of learning at MSHS required a shifting in professional development norms.

In 2013, MHSD implemented its districtwide shift in professional development focused on improvement of instructional practice by engaging in the collaborative

approach of professional learning communities. It was an expectation of the superintendent that each school within the district incorporate PLCs as an initiative to address districtwide downward trending student assessment data. Although PLCs were an initiative mandated by district leadership, and they were cited as having positive impact on student learning, resistance to the initiative was present. Failure to address resistance of the PLC initiative results in the inability to initiate action toward positively impacting student achievement. This issue helped to shape my policy proposal.

My program evaluation allowed me to observe data based on the implementation of PLCs within MSHS and to the extent that the PLCs were implemented with fidelity. I was able to observe data based on the perceptions of the instructional staff, site-based administrators, and district administrators regarding PLC implementation. Data I obtained during my program evaluation determined the majority of the respondents perceived beneficial student learning achievement based on engaging in the PLC process. Although the respondents reported positive benefits, I determined a major issue was present in the PLC process. Unaddressed resistance by some of the instructional staff and administrators was an issue that potentially could have prevented a positive shift in student achievement.

My organizational change plan was formed based on my desire to address resistance of an initiative that had such positive potential within MSHS. I anticipated fully functioning PLCs within MSHS because the school had a long tradition of high academic success. I anticipated observing instructional practices based on collaboratively planned lessons. I also anticipated discovering that all administrators within MSHS were able to properly support the educational staff during PLCs.

Unfortunately, my observed data revealed inconsistencies within content area PLCs.

These data also informed me that active and passive resistance was present.

Collaborative lesson planning and interaction among the instructional staff at MSHS was only occurring in small instances.

The suggestions of my findings assisted me in determining that an organizational change plan was needed at MSHS to address the resistance and inconsistencies with the PLC implementation process. The adaptive change that was desired, as well as the need to address the policy issue regarding this initiative, assisted me in incorporating schoolwide PLC implementation with fidelity at MSHS. Organizational change with supporting policy to address issues within the plan were key components needed to implement and sustain successful PLCs.

Policy Statement

The policy I recommended based on my findings of the evaluation project was a regulatory policy change that revised MSHS's Wednesday bell schedule, and ultimately changed the instructional school day with PLCs as the foundation. I recommended this policy because insufficient time to solely dedicate to PLCs was a concern shared by all three participant groups during my program evaluation. I envisioned the policy would be effective in resolving the problem because instructional staff and administrators were afforded a vital missing component. Potential beneficial advances provided to the staff from the uninterrupted time gained by engaging in the PLC process during the instructional school day are invaluable. The time was a separate entity from their contractual granted times of having a duty-free lunch and having a personal planning period. Not only was this proposed policy beneficial for MSHS, I believe that this policy

would facilitate beneficial enhancements for schools throughout MHSD because lack of sufficient time to engage in all the mandates and requirements of educators is a systemic issue.

As school leaders, we have a critical responsibility to ensure teachers within our sites have ideal conditions for collaboration. Ensuring that instructional staff have time to engage in collaborative practices is one of the most important factors in establishing conditions for learning. Contractual limitations dictate the time that I can hold my teachers accountable for engaging in the PLC process. Because I recognized the difficulty in finding additional time during the contractual school day for teachers and administrators to engage in collaborative practices, I was compelled to make the time by proposing changes to our current schedule and weekly routine on Wednesdays. Tom Many (2009) referred to identifying time for instructional and administrative staff to engage in the PLC process as an opportunity to sustain school improvement because the establishment of time is a resource that is “more important than equipment, facilities, or even staff development.” A policy to restructure available time during the instructional day provides educators the opportunity to engage in collaborative pedagogical approaches. This time enhances instructional best practices geared towards addressing systemic student achievement issues.

Analysis of Needs

Examining the analysis of need for my proposed regulatory policy included consideration of the policy from six distinct disciplinary areas for a deeper understanding to the problems involved. Through the policy analysis I was able to make choices and trace implications. The policy analysis also allowed me to be responsive to the reported

needs of instructional staff and administrators within MSHS. The six areas addressed and analyzed are Educational Analysis, Economic Analysis, Social Analysis, Political Analysis, Legal Analysis, and Moral and Ethical Analysis. Exploring these six areas provided me with the informational research needed to formulate and development a policy that would make strides towards eliminating resistance of the PLC process. Providing all teachers and school leaders of MSHS with the needed time to engage collaboratively, facilitated opportunities for continuous cycles of improvement.

Educational Analysis

Data from my program evaluation and organizational change plan inferred that the majority of the respondents perceived that beneficial increases in student learning were achievable. Increases occur when teachers work collectively and engage in reflective dialogue to improve their personal knowledge and instructional practice (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2010). The driving force behind PLCs is to achieve learning for all. Maintaining a focus on learning affords educators the ability to impart essential content-based knowledge into the lives of their students. As educators work within their PLC, they also receive enrichment. Teachers strengthen their instructional knowledge and develop increased pedagogical skillsets by engaging in the learning process within a PLC (DuFour et al., 2010). In essence, teachers become students and in turn become better educators.

The educational benefits of developing and implementing a policy that is based on increasing opportunities for educators to engage in collaborative practices, such as within a PLC, will place students in position to have increased learning. MSHS had a need to identify protected time for staff members to engage in the PLC reform initiative. As long

as a lack of consistent time for PLC engagement existed, MSHS would not have a key strategy in place to confront resistance, and potentially address declining student assessment scores.

Domain 1, Standard 2 of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards provide an educational framework to describe why a regulatory policy proposing a change in the structure of the Wednesday bell schedule at MSHS was beneficial. This standard outlines the expectation for placing student learning as a priority and states that “effective school leaders demonstrate that student learning is their top priority through leadership actions that build and support a learning organization focused on student success” (FDOE). A policy advocating for PLCs facilitates ideal conditions for instructional staff and administrators to achieve the expectations of this standard. Uninterrupted time to focus on the collaborative work that occurs with the PLC process promotes cultural shifts within an educational setting that establishes high expectations for students while providing systems of support.

Ann Lieberman (1995) stated that “new policies that foster new structures and institutional arrangements for teachers’ learning stem from the change in educational curriculum and pedagogy of professional development” (Lieberman, 1995, p. 592). Before advocating for a new policy, evaluation of existing policies should be completed to determine areas for improvement, adaptation, or modification. Educational policies should foster continuous inquiry-based learning designed during the collaborative efforts of instructional staff (Lieberman, 1995). The instructional capacity of teachers at MSHS benefited from my proposed schoolwide policy. After analyzing obtained student assessment data, I believe that schools throughout the district would achieve similar

improvements in instructional skillsets. I also believe that incorporating my policy recommendation would provide an avenue towards increased student achievement throughout MHSD.

Economic Analysis

As I reflect on the economic factors of implementing schoolwide PLCs with fidelity, I am able to determine that advocating for a policy for restructuring the Wednesday bell schedule does not create a cost factor. This policy merely adjusts instructional time that already exists during the school day. There was not a need for additional staffing allocations at MSHS as time was available for PLCs during identified non-instructional times. Although there was not a cost to restructure the Wednesday bell schedule at MSHS, I was able to determine there would be costs involved to support districtwide implementation of this policy.

Additional funding allocations from district office would be needed to support the professional development of all teachers and administrators. Current practice within MHSD is to provide district level support for each elementary and secondary school to identify three staff members to attend Solution Tree Professional Learning Communities Conference. This PLC conference is designed by educational experts, such as the renowned Rick and Rebecca DuFour, as well as current experts such as Mike Mattos. The Solutions Tree PLC Conference is a research-based experience that supports PLC implementation by providing strategic goals to confront barriers to achieve a sustainable culture of change (Solution Tree, 1998). One of the identified staff members attending the conference must be an administrator while the remaining two must be classroom instructional staff. Supporting districtwide and schoolwide PLC implementation with

fidelity requires every administrator and every instructional staff member the opportunity to be properly trained. Providing structured learning of the initiative for all staff members increases the likelihood that a clear understanding of the process will be received. Having a concise and consistent understanding reduces probability for misinterpretations about PLCs. When staff members fail to understand the true meaning of a PLC, they limit their ability to properly engage in the process. Sylvia Pirtle and Ed Tobia (2014) described the importance of district economic support as a necessary resource. They further stated that effective and sustained districtwide or schoolwide PLCs will only occur when economic support is received from all entities and levels within a school system. “School and district leaders need to ensure that teachers have adequate scheduled time to meet in PLCs; the necessary resources; and access to instructional support to be effective in classrooms” (Pirtle, & Tobia, 2014, p. 3). Effective classroom instruction from a teacher who is proficient in using student data as a reflective tool to drive instruction will positively impact learning.

The cost of the registration to attend the Solutions Tree Professional Learning Communities Institute is approximately \$700 per person. If every administrator and instructional staff of MSHS were registered to attend, the total cost is approximately \$31,500.00. It would be difficult for a limited non-Title 1 school budget to cover this total expense. District level funding support would need to extend beyond just three staff members. Full implementation of PLCs requires all 45 instructional staff members of MSHS the opportunity to attend. Although this policy necessitates additional funding, the benefits of potentially improving declining student achievement would make economic support of the PLC process advantageous.

Teachers gain a sense of self-efficacy when they are made aware of their ability to positively impact student learning. The influence of a teacher empowered with self-efficacy can be the deciding factor in student academic outcomes. This caliber of self-efficacy is cultivated and fostered in a healthy PLC. Sylvia Pirtle and Ed Tobia (2014) stated that teachers vested with self-efficacy have a greater commitment to engaging in the PLC process and facilitates improved skillset that meets the instructional needs of all students (Pirtle, & Tobia, 2014). A proposed policy that fosters self-efficacy among educators engaging in the PLC process can potentially reduce or end resistance towards the initiative.

Efficiency is an economic value that is one of the major influences on U.S. educational policies. Frances Fowler (2013) stated that efficiency occurs when you are able to achieve ideal results when investing. In the educational arena, efficiency revolves around the achievement of high impact learning with low economic requirements (Fowler, 2013). Although my recommended policy requires district level support to be fully enhanced, economic efficiency would be achieved. MSHS staff would be provided with the opportunity to receive professional development focused on engaging in productive PLCs. Self-efficacy of the collaborative PLC members would be strengthened. Pedagogical capacity would be improved. And positive student learning gains would be achieved.

Although the full economic beneficial gains have not been achieved at MSHS, incorporating the revised Wednesday bell has resulted in valuable and efficient use of instructional time for both teachers and students. Revisions to the instructional day provided students with an additional two hours per month for academic enrichment.

These same revisions also provide instructional staff members with uninterrupted time for collaboration during the contractual school day. Because the changes to the schedule are within the normal constraints of a Wednesday schedule, there is not a need for transportation funding. Students are dismissed at the end of the day and are transported home on their assigned school bus or by parent pickup. The financial advantages of not acquiring transportation expenses are too great to go unnoticed. The beneficial economic gains, as well as the efficient use of time during the instructional school day, have led to a positive shifting in staff collaboration and student learning at MSHS. Implementing my policy recommendation throughout MHSD could facilitate the same caliber of economic and achievement advantages.

Social Analysis

Incorporating an initiative that positively impacts and improves student assessment data can have a positive societal impact. When student assessment data experiences multiple years of decline the impact has potential to be magnified. Parents and key stakeholders want assurance that their children are receiving the best education. They want assurance that their children are equipped and prepared for the 21st century work force. Societal pressures and demands for improvement have led school districts throughout the United States to take proactive measures. Initiatives, such as PLCs, are the solution for many school districts attempting to address the needed change.

PLCs have been proven to positively impact student learning and can be a viable solution to addressing societal concerns and pressures (DuFour, 2015). Increasing PLC engagement that facilitates increased student learning gains positively shifts societal concerns, such as the declining language arts and math state assessment scores. Benefits

of PLCs begin to flourish when educators engaging in the practice develop trust and have a willingness to share best practices and recommend opportunities for improvement. Collaborative reflective dialogue is one of the core values in a thriving PLC. Frances Fowler (2013) referred to the professional relationship of PLC members as a “fraternity” (Fowler, 2013, p. 98). Fowler further stated that educators exhibiting values of a fraternity have established rapport and confidence in one another. These characteristics are essential for a PLC to operate with fidelity. My proposed policy would provide the optimal condition and resource that could foster this caliber of PLC. Engaging in the initiative based on my proposed policy would facilitate improved academic achievement and learning gains and would result in a positive social impact.

My policy recommendation has the potential of positive implications that could impact schools throughout the district. Greater student achievement would facilitate an increased number of students attaining graduation, college readiness, and college admission. Currently, MHSD has a graduation rate of 82%. Implementing a policy that would facilitate this caliber of impact has the potential of increasing the graduation rate even further beyond the current state graduation rate of 80.7%. The social ramifications from a higher number of high school and college graduates has the potential of creating a belief that students of MHSD will be prepared for entering the 21st century work force. Tony Wagner (2014) stated that students who are unprepared to enter the work force after high school and college have a greater chance of becoming productive members of society if they are exposed to new ways of learning and critically thinking. Wagner further stated that propelling students to the competence level of full proficiency of the essential survival skills requires collaboration and teamwork, such as the collegial

practices within PLCs (Wagner, 2014). Implementing my policy proposal would address the negative social views of the current state of education and declining student achievement in MHSD. The proposed revisions would create ideal conditions and social views while developing future members of humanity.

Political Analysis

Political advocates, members of Congress, and members of the House Republicans have all taken notice to the positive impacts of redesigning the instructional school day. “Yesterday’s school day is outmoded, and America should now expand school times to reduce achievement gaps...” (Benigni, 2013, p. 3). The political focus to approve my recommended policy is based on the democratic value of liberty. Frances Fowler (2013) also refers to this as the freedom issues associated with educational policies. Advocating for a policy that provided the instructional staff of MSHS with time within the school day to engage in collaborative practice reduced freedom issues. Facilitating opportunities for a restructured schedule led to reduced autonomy concerns of educators. More importantly, this also addressed the ongoing cultural state of lack and insufficiency of time. Proposing opportunities to restructure hours within the school day did not intrude on the freedoms of others. Instead, instructional staff and administrators were provided with the opportunity to enhance the school day and gained a beneficial resource: time.

Political and governmental impulsion for higher educational standards continue to plague MHSD and schools throughout the United States. Multiple years of failing to achieve student assessment growth causes concern for district leadership. Fear of school budgetary reductions, as well as the potential for state subjugation of site-based school

management, are the primary concerns of school districts such as MHSD. Failure to achieve learning growth facilitates an ongoing mandated search by administrators to identify potential causes. Educators frequently identify time as the major factor impeding educational progress. Incorporating the modified instructional schedule within my policy recommendation affords opportunities for the desired restructured time.

Political impacts of restructured school bell times are not isolated to a specific region or district. Instead, policies regarding school times impact schools in districts throughout the United States. Superintendent Mark Benigni (2013) stated that redesigning the instructional school day in Meriden Public School district has resulted in improvements and gains for both instructional staff members and students.

Superintendent Benigni stated that restructuring time within the school day helped to facilitate proficiency levels within core academic programs that had not previously been achieved. The improvements within the Meriden School District have been so substantial that schools within the district have achieved the stellar status of “Schools of Distinction” (Benigni, 2013, p. 3). Identified time within the structured school day would afford teachers with opportunities to improve their skillset for positively impacting the learning of all students. I was able to observe this caliber of improvement through my analysis of MSHS data once the proposed redesigned Wednesday bell schedule was implemented. Just as the political implications regarding changes to the structural time of the school day in Meriden School District were associated with positive changes of achievement, I am confident that restructuring time within the school day would be beneficial for schools throughout MHSD.

Legal Analysis

As a site-based administrator, I have designated administrative privileges to make decisions. Although I have appointed rights, I was careful to elicit the support and assistance of members of a guiding coalition during the process to develop a proposed educational policy. Although this is not a new policy, the recommendation suggested by the coalition required restructuring of a bell schedule that had been in existence since MSHSs inaugural year almost two decades ago. When considering the legal focus of my advocated policy, I had to extend these rights of legal authority to members of the coalition.

Frances Fowler (2013) asserted that although legal authority is an exercise of power, limitations are present and should be considered when recommending educational policy (Fowler, 2013). Because my policy recommendation entailed changes to the structure of hours within the school day, I needed to consider legal constraints of the instructional teacher contract. I realized that changing hours within the instructional school day could potentially cause resentment, bitterness, and resistance of the recommended policy. I took proactive action to address this potential legal issue by incorporating a guiding coalition comprised of instructional staff members and administrators. Enlisting teachers to work in this capacity and engage in legal authority aided in buy-in to the proposed schedule change by other instructional staff members of MSHS.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

As a school principal, I believe it is my moral and ethical responsibility to ensure all students learn and achieve academic improvements. *Domain 4, Standard 10 of the*

Florida Principal Leadership Standards provides a moral and ethical analysis of the behaviors needed to propose my educational policy. This standard requires me to continually demonstrate my commitment to identifying barriers and obstacles that may obstruct student success (FLDOE, 2011). I have a moral and ethical responsibility to take strategic action to address the identified barriers. It is also necessary for me to ensure that the conditions and school culture are conducive for improving student achievement for all students. Frances Fowler (2013) stated that effectively addressing educational equality requires a policy that incorporates an intervention implementation to overcome the issues and potentially achieve the desired equality (Fowler, 2013).

By addressing impeding barriers, such as the resistance present at MSHS, I was able to shift the school culture to an ethical and moralistic school culture. Francis Fowler (2013) referred to this type of school environment as being ideal and advantageous. This setting provides administrators with the support of key stakeholders needed for sustainment of implemented policy change (Fowler, 2013). At MSHS, I was able to establish an ethical and moralistic school environment. Implementing my proposed policy recommendation at MSHS involved all instructional components. I avoided making decisions without allotting time for input from members of the guiding coalition. I was able to establish open communication and trust with my staff. Finally, I was able to establish a belief that instructional staff of MSHS were valued, respected, and genuinely appreciated. Just as I was able to establish a moral and ethical culture at MSHS, implementing my proposed policy would create opportunities for all schools to lead the PLC process within a school culture with established principles based on the best interest of students.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

Advocating for a policy with the assistance of a unified guiding coalition provides positive implications for staff relationships. Including instructional staff in the organizational change and policy development process was a critical component to proactively addressing potential resistance. Instructional staff were prone to buy-in to the reform initiative because they perceived having ownership of the process. As we worked to develop the specific changes to the current Wednesday bell schedule, instructional staff were granted administrative designee authority. Including teachers in the process strengthened their dedication to PLCs. Susan Rosenholtz (1989) stated that supported teachers had greater potential of committing to the effective instruction needed to positively increase learning. The proposed policy for MSHS demonstrated to instructional staff that time to engage in collaborative inquiry was a primary focus and important component for success.

Staff relationships at MSHS were improved, enhanced, and supported in an environment where teachers felt that administrators took their time into consideration. Collegial teacher and administrative relationships were formed and reinforced. Trust is a core value and teachers began to have a willingness to expose their vulnerability regarding areas where their instruction may need improvements. By demonstrating to instructional staff that their personal time was valued, PLCs began to shift and were on the verge of potentially being implemented with fidelity.

Advocating for a policy focused on implementing a framework to achieve student learning increases provided positive implications for community relationships. The development of opportunities for instructional staff and administrators to engage in a

framework that allows them to work within collaborative teams began to shift the perceptions of community members regarding the state of education. Dr. Shirley Hord (1997) affirmed the positive implications for community relations when organizational change places emphasis on establishing PLCs engrossed with potent strategies recognized for promoting positive changes in student learning. When members of the community begin to see positive trends in student assessments, community relationships that were previously dysfunctional and strained begin to improve in a positive direction.

Advocating for a policy focused on implementing a framework to achieve student learning increases can provide positive implications for stakeholder relationships. Key stakeholders, such as parents, can assist in approval of a proposed policy. To increase the likelihood that parents provide support, it is imperative that effective communication be provided to them regarding the proposed policy. Stakeholder's current overall perception regarding student achievement is negative. Because of recent negative media reports, stakeholder perceptions of teachers may be even worse. Shirley Hord stated that a "paradigm shift is needed by the public about what the role of a teacher entails" (1997, p. 6). Most parents do not understand the benefits of teachers working collaboratively. Until change occurs to the perception of stakeholders view regarding teachers and the learning process, certain aspects of negative implications may still exist.

One of the most beneficial aspects of my policy recommendation involved the positive policy implication for stakeholder relationships. Because the proposed policy would only restructure time within the school day, there was not a need for additional transportation or extended supervision. MHSD's Department of Transportation was not taxed with the expense of additional transporting services for students. Instead, bus

riders were able to utilize their regularly scheduled transportation services. With the epidemic need for bus drivers and budgetary constraints, I believe that my policy recommendation would be supported throughout the district because there would not be a need for a transportation funding source. This is one stakeholder group that I am confident would support my proposed restructuring.

Conclusion

Years of student assessment decline have led educational leaders to implement aggressive professional development initiatives. Although the initiatives have their own unique quality, desire to see student learning gains increased is a shared desire by all educational organizations and institutes. Attempts to address the issues of declining student achievement has led to countless policy recommendations for organizational change and approval. Advocating for a policy does not always require new ideas. There are times when the restructuring of a current policy is sufficient to achieve the desired goal. At MSHS, I was able to successfully recommend a policy to restructure the Wednesday bell schedule. Incorporating this policy provided opportunities and dedicated time for instructional and administrative staff at MSHS to engage in effective PLC implementation. Once the time was identified and protected, the collaborative work towards increasing student achievement could begin. The implementation of my proposed policy recommendation directly supports strategic goals of both MSHS and MHSD, the inspiration of all student learning to reach their highest potential. I believe that this policy recommendation will best support instructional staff members and administrators implement effective PLCs to achieve the ultimate student achievement goal.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The issue addressed throughout my writings has one commonality, the need to implement an initiative with fidelity and without the resistance of participants. The writings all share a mutual goal, which is to increase student learning. After years of declining student assessment results, Middle High School District implemented a districtwide initiative. PLCs were an on-going and continuous process centered around a collaborative approach to problem solving best practice strategies for student learning. With the need to incorporate the PLC initiative as a strategy to combat deficiencies in student learning, developing a change plan and policy recommendation to address barriers of resistance were the primary purpose of my project.

Discussion

In 2013, Middle High School District (MHSD - pseudonym) implemented a strategic action to address the multiple years of declining state assessment scores. Language Arts gains declined by 5% from the 2013-2014 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. Algebra 1 gains declined by 12% from the 2013-2014 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. PLCs were the elected tool MHSD used to address the areas in need of change.

The purpose of the initiative was to incorporate a collaborative instructional approach towards addressing declining student achievement. I chose PLCs as my program evaluation project to investigate their effectiveness on increased student achievement on state assessments in language arts and math at MSHS. I also explored PLCs to determine if implementation was completed with fidelity. This process has

addressed my purpose by providing me with opportunities to identify areas of PLC implementation that were in need of improvement to ensure consistency and fidelity. This ultimately revealed relationships between professional development initiatives, such as PLCs, and perceived student achievement gains. I addressed my goals by assessing how well PLCs were implemented at MSHS in relation to Rick DuFour's Seven Stages of Professional Learning Communities. I was also able to determine an increase in student achievement on student assessments since the implementation of PLCs.

My organizational change plan addressed the issue raised by my program evaluation by identifying the need to address resistance of PLC implementation at MSHS. By initiating the changes, MSHS achieved increased Language Arts learning gains. MSHS also achieved a similar increase in the math assessment data. I was able to affirm that when instructional staff and administrators resist the PLC process, they affect the possibility of improved learning for all students.

The policy for which I advocated addressed issues raised in my program evaluation and organization change plan that centered around the need for time. Insufficient time to solely dedicate to PLCs was a concern shared by all participant groups during the study. The advocated policy required adaptive change requiring key stakeholders to shift their mindsets regarding the structure of the Wednesday instructional school day. During the 2016-2017 school year, MSHS implemented a revised Wednesday schedule that provided dedicated time for all PLCs. Since implementing the revised schedule and engaging in the PLC process consistently, MSHS has maintained two years of increased student learning gains on state assessments and advanced placement exams.

During schoolwide pre-planning sessions conducted prior to the start of the 2016-2017, the selected guiding coalition and I introduced the staff of MSHS to a modified Wednesday schedule (Appendix P). The schedule was unique in structure as it allotted time for both academic instructional staff and art area instructional staff to meet within their assigned PLC without interruption for a minimum of 1 hour each week. The rarity of this restructured schedule is that it provided protected time for the instructors to engage in PLCs for a time period of 2 hours one Wednesday per month. Teachers were receptive to the revised schedule because it provided them with sufficient time for content area collaboration, yet the time was separate from their planning period and lunch period. As the school principal, I was able to incorporate action behind my expressed words regarding PLCs. I was also able to convey my passion for PLCs to my staff. Having time to engage in the work of PLCs was noteworthy enough to be scheduled during the instructional school day.

After engaging in schoolwide PLCs utilizing the incorporated modified Wednesday schedule, MSHS achieved student learning gains never attained before. In just one short year of implementing the change of schedule, MSHS advanced 93 points earned on student state assessments, increasing from 842 points to 935 points out of a total of 1100 possible points (Appendix K: Middle Senior High School Student Assessment Data). Students of MSHS achieved increased learning gains in 10 out of 11 categories. Student learning gains in language arts increased from 63% to 71%, with the lowest 25% of the student population increasing from 58% to 80%. Student learning gains in math increased from 67% to 68%, with the lowest 25% of the student population

increasing from 61% to 69%. Student learning gains continue to spiral in a positive direction, and MSHS has achieved a 99% graduation rate.

Similar student achievement success was achieved on Advanced Placement College Board exams (Appendix L: Middle Senior High School Advanced Placement Student Data). The declining student pass rate on these exams greatly improved as a result of the revised PLC implementation process. Instructional staff targeted anchor standards and skillset to increase student proficiency. During the 2015 – 2016 school year, students achieved a 43% AP pass rate with a score of 3 or higher. This was lower than the state rate of 54% and the global pass rate of 60%. After incorporating the scheduling change, MSHS students improved their AP pass rate from 43% to 59% during the 2016 – 2017 school year. This also allowed MSHS students to surpass the state pass rate of 55%. Currently, MSHS students continued to make momentous AP pass rates. During the 2017 – 2018 school year, MSHS students achieved a 63% pass rate on AP exams. This exceeded the state pass rate of 56% and the global pass rate of 61%.

I attribute the impressive student assessment gains to the time instructional staff and administrators had to engage in quality collaborative practices within their PLCs. Progressing through the Seven Stages of PLCs afforded teachers the opportunity to place emphasis and focus on learning. Instructional staff and administrators were able to cultivate a collaborative school culture with shared and collective responsibility of all staff. The on-going and continuous nature of the PLC process also allowed us to continually place emphasis on the focus of student results. We were on our way to ensuring that supportive instructional practices were established to facilitate improved learning gains for all students of MSHS. As a result of my research, I revealed

relationships between professional development initiatives, such as PLCs, and student achievement gains.

Leadership Lessons

Leadership lessons I have learned in this process all center around the PLC process. I have learned that addressing active and passive resistance is possible, however it is a lengthy and on-going process. I have learned that authentic engagement within a PLC by instructional staff members and administrators is difficult to monitor and gauge. Finally, I have learned that although student learning gains were achieved at MSHS, some of the staff members still engaged in the process out of compliancy rather than total commitment to the initiative.

Over the past three years, I have grown as a leader of change. I have learned that effective leaders continually strive to engage in the learning process. I have learned that self-reflection is an essential strength of effective leaders. Lastly, I have learned that when the leader sets the tone for expectations, establishes a culture of trust and relationship, and engages in all efforts collaboratively with instructional staff, positive student outcomes can be achieved.

As a leader, I will use the information generated through this study going forward to advocate for schoolwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities. I will advocate for the importance of demonstrating commitment to an initiative by restructuring time that is already in existence to support the initiative. Lastly, I will utilize the information to continually address any inclinations of resistance to an initiative that is recognized as positively impacting student learning.

Conclusion

A goal for academic success is a primary goal of every school principal. Establishing a school culture that is conducive for this goal to come into fruition requires strategic and intentional planning and purposeful actions. It requires a boldness to address barriers and obstacles that may impede progress. Goal attainment of this magnitude requires leadership that understands the importance of shared and distributive practices. Most importantly, it is grounded on a foundation of collective commitment of a school community that shares a unified vision for student success. “Working collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is the expected way of work in Middle High School District. Research indicates that levels of learning increase dramatically when educators work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for the success of ALL students” (MHSD Superintendent, personal communication, December 5, 2017). By placing emphasis on a schoolwide focus on learning, establishing a schoolwide collaborative culture with collective responsibility and accountability, and by placing a focus on student data results, the recipe for academic success is perfected.

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Appendix A: Teacher Survey

Dear Teacher:

I am a doctoral student at National-Louis University completing my dissertation, "A Proposed Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities". As a part of my research, I would like to survey your responses to the following statements, in order to assess perceptions of the impact of Professional Learning Communities. Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue this survey at any point. All respondent information will be kept confidential. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please indicate your approval below.

1. What is your current subject area/title? _____ 2. Years of experience in education? _____
3. According to the "Seven Stages of PLC's" what stage is your current PLC operating? _____

Read each phrase, then place an X in the appropriate column for each item.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I actively contribute within my Professional Learning Community.					
5. Professional Learning Communities have been implemented with fidelity within my school.					
6. Individual Professional Development Plans are implemented with consistency within my school.					
7. Teachers within my school work collaboratively to develop student common assessments.					
8. Teachers within my school work collaboratively to improve instruction.					
9. My Professional Learning Community impacted my Individual Professional Development Plan.					
10. The implementation of Professional Learning Communities facilitates increased student achievement.					
11. Teachers within my school meet a minimum of one hour weekly within their Professional Learning Community.					
12. Although my school has implemented Professional Learning Communities, teachers participate out of compliance rather than commitment.					
13. Teachers within my school are committed to Professional Learning Communities as an important factor in attaining increased student achievement.					
14. Teachers within my school perceive that Professional Learning Communities truly function as they are intended to function.					
15. Teachers within my school perceive effective support from school based administrators within Professional Learning Communities.					
16. Teachers within my school perceive that school based administrators communicate a clear vision, mission, and goal regarding Professional Learning Communities.					

_____ **Yes, I am willing to participate in a 30 minute voluntary interview and up to 5 email exchanges. I will send an email to evensx4@gmail.com with *WILLING TO INTERVIEW* in the subject line.**

Adapted from the Question Pro web link: <http://www.questionpro.com/a/showSurveyLibrary.do?surveyID=431060>

Appendix B: Administrator Survey

Dear Administrator:

I am a doctoral student at National-Louis University completing my dissertation, "A Proposed Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities". As a part of my research, I would like to survey your responses to the following statements, in order to assess perceptions of the impact of Professional Learning Communities. Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue this survey at any point. All respondent information will be kept confidential. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please indicate your approval below.

1. What is your current job title? _____ 2. Years of experience in education? _____
3. According to the "Seven Stages of PLC's" what stage is your current school/district PLC operating? _____

Read each phrase, then place an X in the appropriate column for each item.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. My school/district has a clear mission, vision, and goal regarding Professional Learning Communities.					
5. Professional Learning Communities have been implemented with fidelity within my school/district.					
6. Individual Professional Development Plans are implemented with consistency within my school/district.					
7. Teachers within my school/district work collaboratively to develop student common assessments.					
8. Teachers within my school/district work collaboratively to improve instruction.					
9. Professional Learning Communities impact teacher Individual Professional Development Plans.					
10. The implementation of Professional Learning Communities facilitates increased student achievement.					
11. Teachers within my school/district meet a minimum of one hour weekly within Professional Learning Communities.					
12. Although my school/district has implemented Professional Learning Communities, it is perceived that teachers participate out of compliance rather than commitment.					
13. Teachers within my school/district are committed to Professional Learning Communities as an important factor in attaining increased student achievement.					
14. Teachers within my school/district perceive that Professional Learning Communities truly function as they are intended to function.					
15. Administrators hold all members of Professional Learning Communities accountable for clear and appropriate standards of performance.					
16. Administrators hold all members of Professional Learning Communities accountable for student achievement.					

_____ **Yes, I am willing to participate in a 30 minute voluntary interview and up to 5 email exchanges. I will send an email to evensx4@gmail.com with *WILLING TO INTERVIEW* in the subject line.**

Adapted from the Question Pro web link: <http://www.questionpro.com/a/showSurveyLibrary.do?surveyID=431060>

Appendix C: Informed Consent Survey

Adult Participant Survey

My name is Chundra L. Evens, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: “A Proposed Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities.” The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of Professional Learning Communities on effecting student achievement on state assessments. The study will also examine the impact of how teachers document their instructional practice based on Professional Learning Communities within their Individual Professional Growth Plans to facilitate increased student achievement.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding Professional Learning Communities at your school. I would like to survey you in regard to your thoughts on the implementation of Professional Learning Communities at your school.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate in a printed survey that I will give to you, to be completed and returned using specific instructions I will include at the end of the survey. It should take approximately 30 minutes for you to complete the survey. All information collected in the survey reflects your experience and opinion as an educator participating within Professional Learning Communities.

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. I will keep the identity of you, the school, the district, and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants in the report. Only I will have access to all of the survey data, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all survey data. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of the implementation process of Professional Learning Communities at your school or district and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at: cevens17@my.nlu.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at cevens17@my.nlu.edu. If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu, or the NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526 National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Chundra L. Evens

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix D: District Level Administrator Interview Protocol

This will be a face-to-face interview process lasting approximately thirty minutes in duration. The interview will take place during non-instructional school hours. All names will be held in confidence and only I will hold a copy of the verbatim interview responses. I will use a pseudonym during the interview to protect your anonymity. I will use both a tape recording device and paper/pencil for note taking purposes.

1. What are your perceptions regarding the districtwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities?
2. At the district level, what are some of the challenges you have observed with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?
3. At the district level, how might these observed challenges of implemented Professional Learning Communities be overcome?
4. What advantages or benefits have you observed at the district level with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?
5. What are your suggestions for implementing Professional Learning Communities so we have consistency within individual schools in our district?
6. How would you describe the level of impact Professional Learning Communities have had on student achievement throughout our district?
7. What are your suggestions for teachers in developing Individual Professional Development Plans so we have consistency within individual schools in our district?
8. How would you describe the level of impact instructional Individual Professional Development Plans have had on student achievement throughout our district?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?

Appendix E: School Site Based Administrator Interview Protocol

This will be a face-to-face interview process lasting approximately thirty minutes in duration. The interview will take place during non-instructional school hours. All names will be held in confidence and only I will hold a copy of the verbatim interview responses. I will use a pseudonym during the interview to protect your anonymity. I will use both a tape recording device and paper/pencil for note taking purposes.

1. What are your perceptions regarding the schoolwide implementation of Professional Learning Communities?
2. What are some schoolwide challenges you have observed with the implementation of schoolwide Professional Learning Communities?
3. How might the observed challenges of implemented Professional Learning Communities at the school based level be overcome?
4. What advantages have you observed at the school level with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?
5. What would be some suggestions for implementing Professional Learning Communities so we have consistency within our school?
6. How would you describe the level of impact Professional Learning Communities have had on student achievement throughout our school?
7. What would be some suggestions for teachers in developing Individual Professional Development Plans so we have consistency within our school?
8. How would you describe the level of impact instructional Individual Professional Development Plans have had on student achievement throughout our school?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?

Appendix F: Teacher Interview Protocol

This will be a face-to-face interview process lasting approximately thirty minutes in duration. The interview will take place during non-instructional school hours. All names will be held in confidence and only I will hold a copy of the verbatim interview responses. I will use a pseudonym during the interview to protect your anonymity. I will use both a tape recording device and paper/pencil for note taking purposes.

1. What do you think are the greatest advantages of Professional Learning Communities?
2. How long have you been participating in a Professional Learning Community?
3. As a result of participating in a Professional Learning Community, what do you perceive as some of the greatest benefits or advantages that a PLC offers?
4. As a result of participating in a Professional Learning Community, what do you think are some of the greatest challenges regarding Professional Learning Communities?
5. How do you think Professional Learning Communities impact student achievement?
6. What would you change about the implementation of Professional Learning Communities?
7. What do you perceive as the greatest challenge with implementing Professional Learning Communities?
8. Were all teachers able to participate equitably within Professional Learning Communities? If not, how might we accomplish this?
9. What do you perceive as the role of administrators within Professional Learning Communities?
10. How would you describe the level of involvement of administrators within Professional Learning Communities?
11. What do you perceive as advantages of creating Individual Professional Development Plans?
12. What do you perceive as challenges with creating Individual Professional Development Plans?
13. How do you think Individual Professional Development Plans impact student achievement?
14. What would you change about the development of Individual Professional Development Plans?
15. What do you perceive as the role of administrators in the development of your Individual Professional Development Plan?
16. How would you describe the level of consistency by administrators with the implementation of instructional staff members' IPGPs?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Professional Learning Communities?
18. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding Individual Professional Development Plans?

Appendix G: Informed Consent Interview

Adult Participant Interview

My name is Chundra L. Evens, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "A Proposed Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities." The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of Professional Learning Communities on effecting student achievement on state assessments. The study will also examine the impact of how teachers document their instructional practice based on Professional Learning Communities within their Individual Professional Growth Plans to facilitate increased student achievement.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding Professional Learning Communities.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the interviews and agree to participate in one 30-minute interview, with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order to clarify any questions I may have regarding your interview data. All information collected in the interview reflects your experience and opinion as an educator participating within Professional Learning Communities.

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all of the interview tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all interview transcripts, tapes, and notes. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of the implementation process of Professional Learning Communities at your school and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at cevens17@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at: evens17@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu, or the National-Louis Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526 National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Chundra L. Evens

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix H: Professional Learning Communities Observation Rubric

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
1. The PLC includes all members of the grade level/content area.					
2. The PLC Norms (procedures, time management, meeting location) are established and evident.					
3. All members of the PLC are characterized by mutual respect, support, and valued contribution to the PLC.					
4. The PLC members demonstrate evidence of collaborative lesson planning					
5. The PLC members demonstrate evidence of sharing of instructional practices and ideas to promote increased student achievement.					
6. The PLC members demonstrate evidence of common formative assessments.					
7. The PLC members demonstrate evidence of analyzing student formative assessment data.					
8. The PLC members demonstrate evidence of incorporating components of their IPDP while analyzing student formative assessment data.					
9. The PLC members demonstrate effective conflict resolution strategies while collaborating within their PLC.					

Adapted from DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010) *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Appendix I: Informed Consent Observation

Adult Participant Professional Learning Communities Observation

My name is Chundra L. Evens, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "A Proposed Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities." The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of Professional Learning Communities on effecting student achievement on state assessments. The study will also examine the impact of how teachers document their instructional practice based on Professional Learning Communities within their Individual Professional Growth Plans to facilitate increased student achievement.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding Professional Learning Communities.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the observations and agree to participate in up to 5 observation sessions, lasting up to 1 hour per session. All information collected during the observation sessions will provide me with direct accounts of the collaborative encounters of instructional staff members while in their respective Professional Learning Communities.

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all of the observation data, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all data, and notes. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of the implementation process of Professional Learning Communities at your school and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at cevens17@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at: evens17@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu, or the National-Louis Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526 National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Chundra L. Evens

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix J: Informed Consent to Conduct Research

School Site Administrator: Consent to Conduct Research at School Site

My name is Chundra L. Evens, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent for selected staff at your school to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: “A Proposed Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities”. The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of Professional Learning Communities on effecting student achievement on state assessments.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding Professional Learning Communities. I will survey and interview up to 1 principal, 2 assistant principals, and up to 60 teachers in regard to their thoughts on Professional Learning Communities at your school.

I will give teachers and administrators who volunteer a printed survey to be completed and returned using specific instructions as included, and an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the survey and agree to take the survey. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Also, participating teachers and administration may volunteer for one 30-minute interview. I will conduct one 30 minute interview with those participants who have completed an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the interview and agree to be interviewed, with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order to clarify any questions I may have regarding their interview data. I will obtain the participants email addresses in person when they sign the consent forms. I will audio tape the interview and transcribe the tapes. I will also collect formative assessment data, summative assessment data, and state assessment data of all students within 6th – 12th grade. The formative assessments would include end-of-quarter exams in Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and all administrations of Osceola Writes. The formative assessment data would also include all teacher created formative assessments in GradeCam. The summative and state assessments would include Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and Language Arts, which the district has informed me they will provide to me. All information collected in the survey and interviews reflects their experience and opinions as a teacher regarding Professional Learning Communities. I will also complete up to 5 observations of PLC sessions and will complete a rubric based on my observation within each session. I will observe each PLC session for up to 1 hour.

By signing below, you are giving your consent for me to ask for voluntary participation from selected stakeholders to participate in this research study: to complete a survey, participate in an interview, and be observed in up to 5 Professional Learning Communities.

All participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all surveys, interview tapes and transcripts, and observation rubric field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all surveys, interview tapes and transcripts, and observation rubric field notes. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding Professional Learning Communities at your school and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at cevens17@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at: evens17@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I

have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu, or the National-Louis Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526 National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Principal Name (Please Print)

Principal Signature

Date

Chundra L. Evens

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

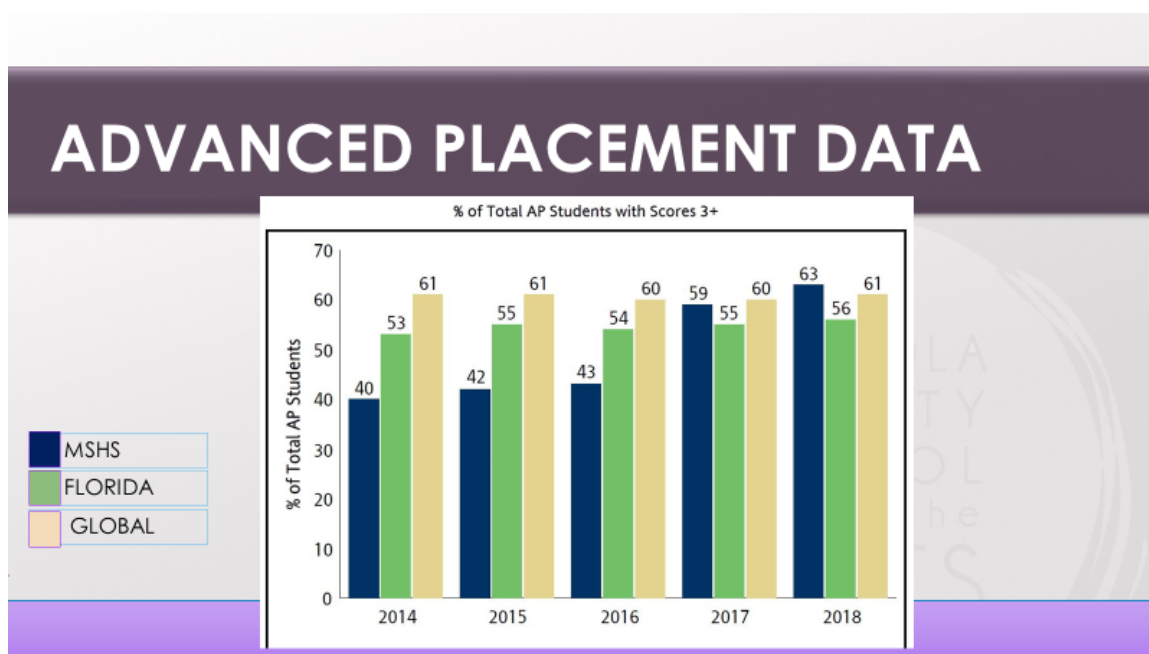
Appendix K: Middle Senior High School Student Assessment Data

SCHOOL DATA

ELA Ach.	ELA Learning Gains	ELA Learning Gains of the Lowest 25%	Math Ach.	Math Learning Gains	Math Learning Gains of the Lowest 25%	Science Ach.	Social Studies Ach.	Middle School Accel.	Graduation Rate	College and Career Accel.	Total Points Earned	Total Components	Percent of Total Possible Points	Percent Tested
92	74	83	84	74	66	88	99	93	99	82	934	11	85	99
92	71	80	85	68	69	90	93	96	100	91	935	11	85	99
88	63	58	81	67	61	96	86	69	99	74	842	11	77	96
2017-2018														
2016-2017														
2015-2016														

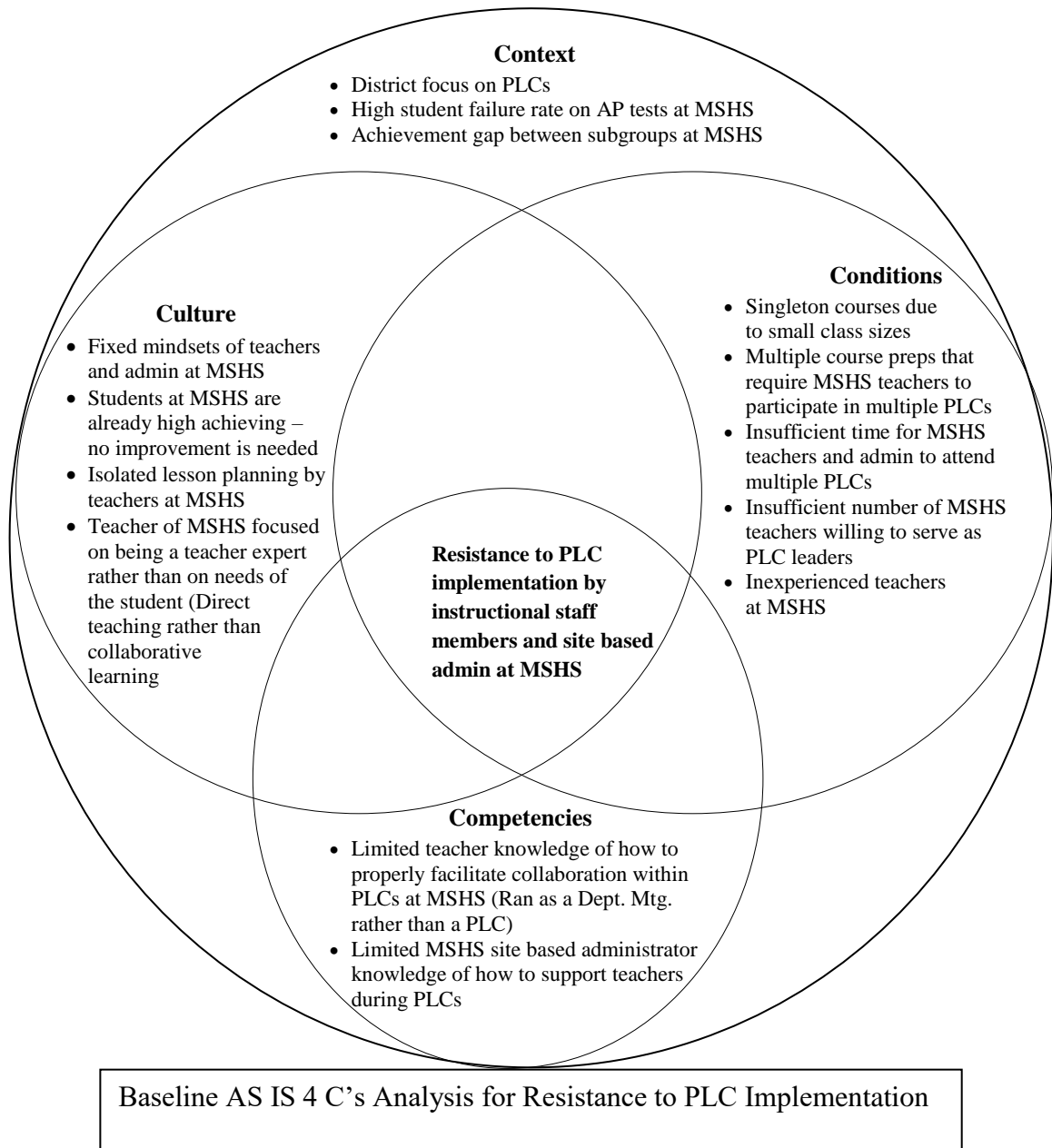
SOURCE: FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2016 - 2017 SCHOOLS
PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS

Appendix L: Middle Senior High School Advanced Placement Student Data

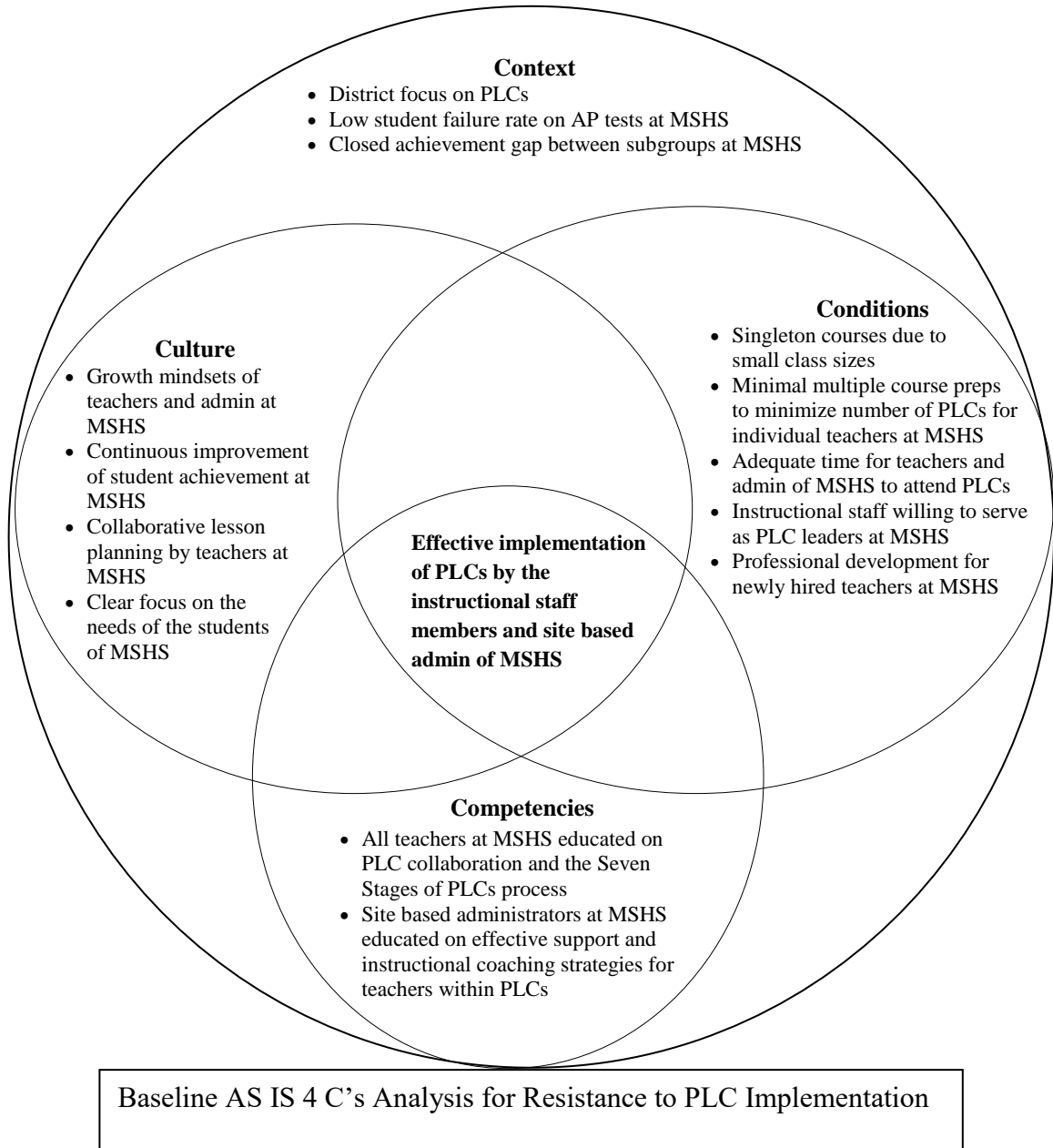


SOURCE: COLLEGE BOARD ADVANCED PLACEMENT AP[®] FIVE-YEAR SCHOOL SCORE SUMMARY (2018)

Appendix M: AS IS 4 C's Analysis



Appendix N: TO BE 4 Cs Analysis



Appendix O: Strategies and Actions Chart

	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
CONTEXT		
	Organizational Theory	Developed Guiding Coalition and vision to address resistance of schoolwide PLC implementation within MSHS.
	Leadership	Designed professional development geared towards strengthening collaboratively working to identify and develop individual professional growth goals.
	Professional Development	Supported teachers with training to identify and understand power standards, analyze student data, and categorize assessments techniques.
	Communication	Communicated expectations for weekly participation in PLCs. Contributed to student data analysis discussions.
CULTURE		
	Organizational Theory	Identified protected time for weekly PLC engagement. Provided time for common assessment development, student assessment data analysis, and for working collectively to develop instructional adaptations based on data results and the needs of students.
	Leadership	Identified MSHS instructional aspiring leaders with depth of content knowledge regarding the PLC process to serve as PLC Leaders and Facilitators. Identified instructional leaders to model effective engagement in the PLC process with teachers in all content and are area PLCs
	Professional Development	Trained teachers on identifying, comprehending, properly deconstructing power standards. Trained teachers on implementation of the “7 Stages of PLCs”. Trained teachers on understanding the continuous improvement intent of the PLC process.
	Communication	Provided timely on-going feedback to all staff and administrators regarding the progression of each PLC. Instructional leaders provided feedback regarding PLC growth opportunities. Communicated progression plans for continuous improvement towards the next PLC stage.

CONDITIONS		
	Organizational Theory	<p>Provided time for teachers and administrators to engage in PLCs.</p> <p>Provided common planning periods within the master schedule.</p> <p>Reduced the number of instructional class assignments given to each teacher.</p> <p>Recommended aspiring leaders to serve as PLC Leaders and PLC Facilitators.</p>
	Leadership	<p>Monitored progression of each content area PLC stage.</p> <p>Led weekly data analysis sessions.</p> <p>Guided all content area PLCs through the seven stages.</p>
	Professional Development	<p>All MSHS staff trained through the Solution Tree PLC Institute.</p> <p>Instructional leaders trained on guiding the PLC process.</p> <p>Instructional leaders guided new MSHS teachers through the PLC process.</p> <p>Increased knowledge of the “why” behind PLC implementation.</p>
	Communication	<p>Increased monitoring and expectation accountability of PLC implementation.</p> <p>Increased discussion opportunities between PLC members.</p>
COMPETENCIES		
	Organizational Theory	Provided support and instructional coaching.
	Leadership	Identified enrichment opportunities to build administrator capacity.
	Professional Development	<p>Built administrative change leadership capacity.</p> <p>Enhanced standards-based knowledge and instructional pedagogy of all teachers.</p>
	Communication	<p>Communicated PLC benefits and areas for growth opportunity.</p> <p>Communicated areas of potential resistance or barriers to PLC implementation.</p>

Appendix P: Middle Senior High School Revised Wednesday Schedule

MIDDLE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MODIFIED WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE FOR 2016/2017 SCHOOL YEAR

	4 th /7 th Period 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM "Recital Time"	3:00 PM – 4:00 PM "Teacher Meeting Time"	PLC HOURS
1 st WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:30- 9AM FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEV. ACADEMIC SUBJECT AREAS MEET FOR PLC STUDENTS MEET WITH ARTS AREA TEACHER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACADEMIC AREAS DEPARTMENT/GRADE LEVEL MEETING ART AREAS MEET FOR THEIR PLC 	2 HRS 1 HR
2 nd WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:30-9AM FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEV. ART AREAS MEET FOR THEIR PLC ACADEMIC TEACHERS WILL TEACH/PROVIDE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT COURSES 6-12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ART AREAS CONTINUE THEIR PLC MEETING ACADEMIC AREAS MEET FOR THEIR PLC 	2 HRS 1 HR
3 rd WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:30-9AM FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEV. ART & ACADEMIC TEACHERS WILL BE AVAILABLE AND PROVIDE FOR STUDY HALL AS WELL AS ACADEMIC HELP (SECOND SEMESTER) SPRING SHOWCASE REHEARSALS & PLANNING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BOTH ART AND ACADEMIC AREAS WILL MEET FOR THEIR PLC'S 	1 HR
4 th WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:30-9AM FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEV. 3rd Period is AFTER Lunch, then RECITAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND/OR TEACHER CLASSROOM TIME 	TOTAL HOURS FOR ACADEMIC & ART AREA PLCS = 4 HRS

ACADEMIC PLC GROUPS: MATH, HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, ELA, SCIENCE (HOPE) & FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ART AREA PLC GROUPS: BAND, CREATIVE WRITING, DANCE, DRAMA, ORCHESTRA, TECH THEATER, VISUAL ARTS, AND VOCAL